

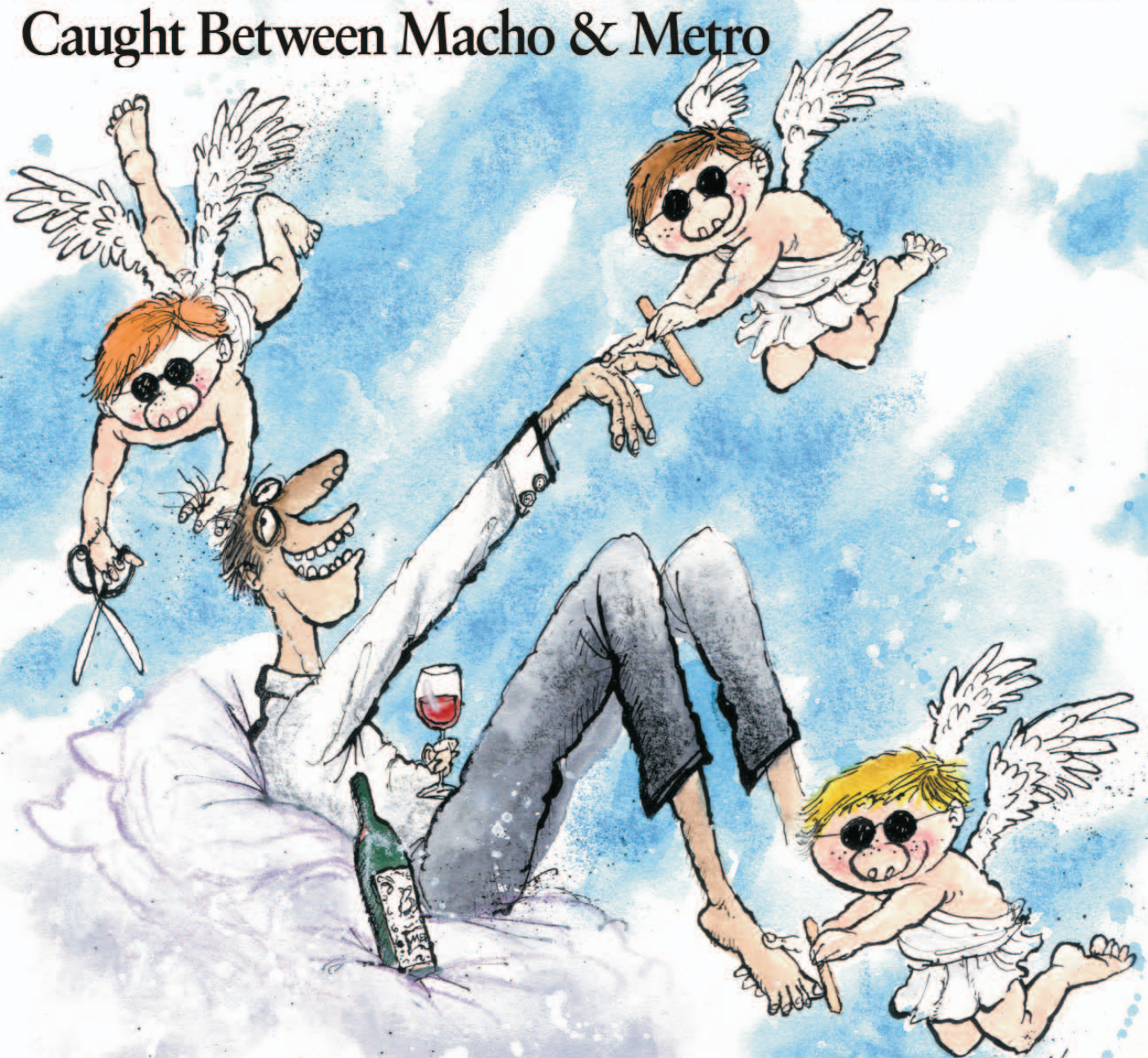
ROAD MAP RESCUE ■ IRAQ EXIT ■ WHITE COLLAR BLUES

OCTOBER 20, 2003

The American Conservative

WHO'S THE MAN?

Caught Between Macho & Metro



Mark Ruffalo 2003

RELIGIOUSLY INCORRECT

The fact that political correctness has been a scourge on reasoned discourse does not mean there is no such thing as racist cant or that publications vigilant against the former should not also eschew the latter. An example of each appears in your Sept. 8 issue.

As a Muslim of Arab extraction, I found Peter Wood's "Inshallah in Iraq" interesting and useful. Contrast Razib Khan's "Old Europe's Obit," which recounts a conversation between a Dutch student and a Pakistani-American blog administrator. Khan's sole qualification appears to be that he is a "brown-skinned immigrant" with all his teeth. He doesn't claim to possess any way of determining whether this student might be a polylingual racist crackpot.

Khan presents assertions that Moroccans and Muslims are welfare cheats, practice a "feudal lifestyle," and contribute nothing to Dutch "commerce and industry" without citing a single checkable source. Given its lack of reasoned argumentation or respectable attribution, this is little more than name-calling. As a great fan of *AC*, I am disappointed.

JAMIL NASIR

Gaithersburg, Md.

Razib Khan replies:

Someone seems to have taken my piece far more seriously than it was intended. I simply wished to inject a bit of levity into the lives of the passengers of a sinking ship; the gloomy facts are known to all. Additionally, I am not Pakistani-American. Mr. Nasir's error was an excessive application of generally correct rules-of-thumb, and I forgive it. On the other hand, his aspersions on my friend's character I must object to. Since *AC* is a respectable publication I didn't mention that David's last girlfriend was Spanish, his previous one Turkish, and that his anger at Moroccan immigrants is partially driven by their habit of

shielding their daughters from his amorous intentions. Bigots do not yearn to sleep with the enemy, my friend.

BARBARIANS ALL

Several assumptions cause me to question Philip Giralaldi's "The Jihadi War." (Sept. 22). Was the world's "vast outpouring of sympathy" following 9/11 sincere? The average schmuck in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey was openly pleased with the massacre at the twin towers. These folks are at war with the West because we are a rival. They want to eliminate us. The idea of the invasion of Iraq not "sitting well" is insignificant.

I also object to the use of "clash of civilizations." The cultural zone in the Middle East can only laughably be termed a "civilization." It is a system of brutality, chaos, and incivility.

JEFF PECK

via e-mail

DEMONIZING DAMASCUS

Anders Strindberg's "Road from Damascus" (Sept. 22) gets it all wrong. Syria is far from an ally, and Hezbollah is far from worthy of our redemption.

There are two points Strindberg wants to give Syria credit on—taming Hezbollah and phased withdrawals from Lebanon. On the first point, Syria calls the shots whenever it feels like igniting south Lebanon with Hezbollah missile attacks and Israeli retribution. Syria is preventing Lebanon's national secular army from fulfilling their UN obligation to deploy to the southern border. Hezbollah's cling to arms in Lebanon as a theocratic militia force is an affront to all the Lebanese sectarian and political factions that gave up their call to arms for the sake of a lasting peace.

On the second point, Syrian cosmetic military moves within Lebanon are designed to conceal its defiance of the UN resolution that calls for all foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon.

Whenever it feels fit to pressure Washington without bearing direct responsibility, Damascus uses the country it illegally occupies for its trademark role as arsonist and firefighter.

If the Syrian regime lies to its occupied neighbor, to the UN, and about fighters crossing their border into Iraq, why should America regard this regime as a "would-be ally?"

NORMAN LAHAGE

Brooklyn, N.Y.

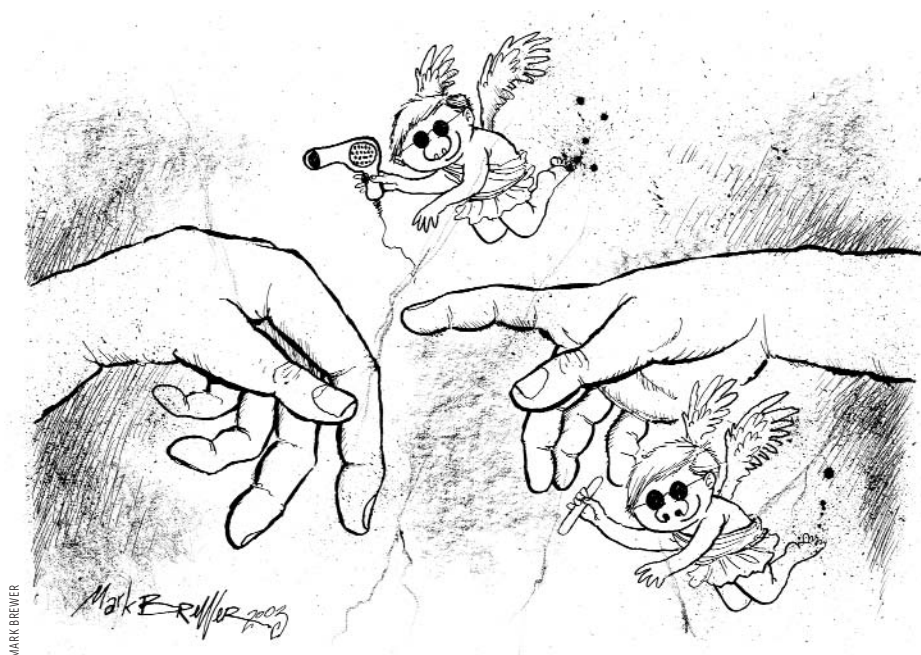
Anders Strindberg replies:

The government of Bashar al-Assad was one of the U.S.'s most valuable regional allies in the war against terrorism. These efforts were not rebuffed because the administration has a problem co-operating with non-democracies—note, for instance, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The White House is snubbing Syria based on Israeli interests, and the main point of my argument was that this has directly harmed our war against terrorism.

On points of fact: while Damascus has close relations with and influence over Hezbollah, it does not control the movement. As for the ignition of southern Lebanon, Mr. Lahage gets the sequence wrong. The pattern since the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces in May 2000 has been Hezbollah rocket attacks in response to the Israeli air force's routine violations of Lebanese airspace.

Moreover, it is often forgotten or ignored that Syrian troops are in Lebanon at the request of the Lebanese government and are not an occupation force. Based on my ongoing conversations with Syrian military and political leaders, as well as senior UN military commanders serving in the area, it is clear that the Syrians feel a need to extricate themselves from Lebanon.

The American Conservative welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to letters@amconmag.com or by mail to 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA 22209.



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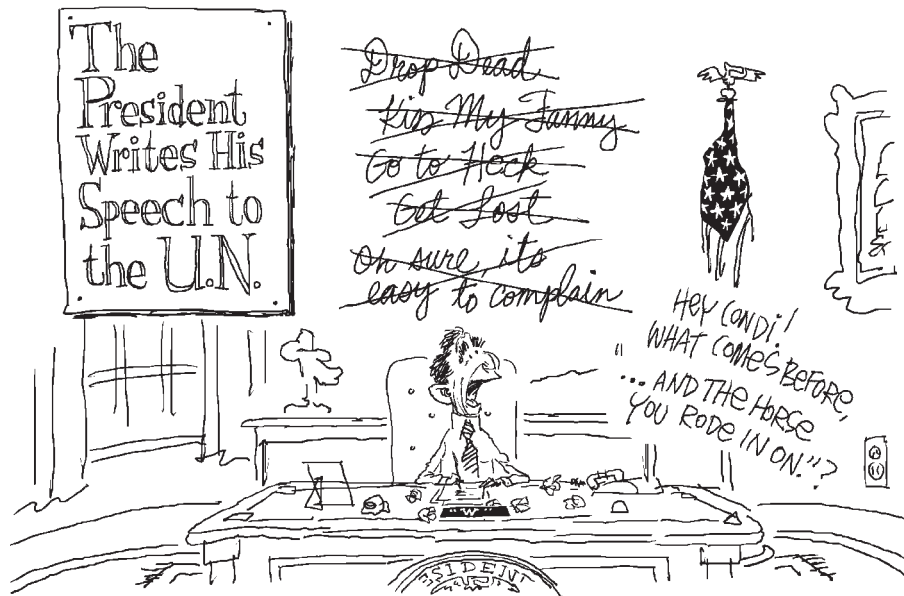
REGIME CHANGE

The White House's rebuke of Vice President Dick Cheney's "Meet the Press" performance last month has sparked speculation that President Bush, his poll numbers in free fall, may change the GOP ticket. Cheney shocked official Washington by lying openly during his stint with Tim Russert, resurrecting the canard that Saddam Hussein was linked to the 9/11 attacks. Three days later, President Bush made front-page news when he admitted, "We've had no evidence" of an Iraq-9/11 tie. Cheney, who more than any other administration official, pushed the red herring that Iraq had nuclear capability, told Russert he "mis-spoke" on the various occasions he made that claim.

Team Bush has reportedly commissioned private polls indicating that Cheney is a drag on the GOP ticket. (The Halliburton connection doesn't help.) With the Bush foreign policy in disarray, it's no surprise that last winter's gurgling about putting Condi Rice on the ticket has stopped cold. Rice only makes sense if you believe the administration's foreign policy has been effective, but she is, to say the least, no Henry Kissinger.

But Cheney should be dropped anyway. As the chief of Bush's transition in 2000, he is the individual most responsible for squirreling the neoconservatives into key slots in the Pentagon and the National Security Council, ensuring that when 9/11 came, they were well placed to push for their wish list of pre-emptive wars against Arab countries.

Key House Democrats have already called for the resignations of Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz and are right to do so. But President Bush needs a more thorough housecleaning if his administration is to right itself. There are several Republicans in the Senate with distinguished foreign-affairs credentials. Karl Rove should be vetting them.



MIKE LESTER www.caglecartoons.com

[FAMILY]

ISABEL'S GIFT

In the wake of Isabel's fury, while millions cleared out fallen trees and mopped up basements turned swimming pools, the *Washington Post* noted an urban irony: disconnected electricity was recharging local families. With Nintendo and ESPN and *www.whatever* turned off, parents met their kids again—and found they rather liked them. "Our good time is ruined," one Virginia mother of three lamented when the power switched back on. "We were all sitting around finally enjoying our family. I could have handled one more night. Now they want to watch TV..."

The *Post* termed this burst of novel behavior—tossing balls, playing board games, practicing piano—"creative parenting." But it's not so unfamiliar to Beltway parents. They grew up this way—before dual commutes and power suits, frozen lasagna and text messaging splintered families into overscheduled passersby. Not so long ago, neighbors looked after each other, children played outside till streetlights blinked on, and dinner was a daily ritual rather than an annual

holiday. An age ago and a world away.

Monday morning, D.C. raced back up to speed with deadlines missed and school days to make up. But between the traffic and the noise, a few parents might have recalled the darkened weekend and found there a sad answer to what's gone wrong with their kids.

[DEMOGRAPHICS]

RUSSIAN ROULETTE

In the race to Western demographic extinction, "Mother" Russia may be leading the pack to the mortuary. Her birthrate, at 1.17 children per woman, is among the lowest in the world, and 60 percent of Russian pregnancies now end in abortion. The AP frames the figure more starkly: "For every 10 births there are about 13 abortions, compared with roughly three in the United States." As Russians drink themselves to death, male life expectancy declines, while young people either flee abroad or adopt Western mores about work and family. As a result, the Russian population could fall from 143 million to as few as 80 million by 2050.

The implications for the nation's

future are dire. According to a recent UPI analysis, Russia is already “likely less populous than Muslim, nuclear-armed Pakistan.” Stratfor, the private intelligence firm, warns that illegal Chinese immigration could undermine Moscow’s control over the sparsely populated Russian Far East. Indeed, President Putin has termed the population implosion a “creeping catastrophe” that imperils his country’s very existence.

To reverse this trend, Russian municipalities have offered various financial incentives, including free houses, to families who promise three or more children. Now comes word that—thanks in part to the welcome revival of the Orthodox Church—the national government is scaling back its Communist-era policy of abortion on demand. While first-trimester terminations remain unrestricted, new regulations cut from 13 to four the number of legal hardships, or “social indicators,” by which a woman can justify aborting her child after 12 weeks.

For a country in which abortion had long been the favored means of birth control, these new guidelines, however liberal, are a good start and a bold example to Russia’s European neighbors. For her unborn generations, they could be the beginnings of a miracle.

[PRESIDENCY]

JUST ASK WOLFIE

“I glance at the headlines just to kind of [get a] flavor for what’s moving. I rarely read the stories and get briefed by people who ... probably read the news themselves. ... I appreciate people’s opinions, but I’m more interested in news. And the best way to get the news is from objective sources. And the most objective sources I have are people on my staff who tell me what’s happening in the world.”

—President George W. Bush
Fox, Sept. 22, 2003

[CULTURE]

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

When RU-486 was legalized in 2000, Planned Parenthood said it would “offer women more privacy in the abortion decision.” But for 18-year-old Holly Patterson, privacy meant she suffered alone and ultimately died, a casualty of a pale yellow pill the FDA deems “safe and effective.”

The California teenager, who without her parents’ knowledge got RU-486 from a local Planned Parenthood clinic, is the seventh North American woman to die after taking the drug. But rather than warning women of its potentially fatal consequences, abortion providers still market RU-486 as the ultimate in personal choice. Congress entertains the same illusion. “In the privacy of my own home, I felt like I was in control,” a New York woman testified before a Senate committee the month RU-486 became legal. “I could choose the time and the place. And I liked the idea of working with my own body to expel the pregnancy.”

But Holly Patterson’s body didn’t “work with” her. In fact, some 8 percent of patients taking RU-486 experience complications, and while any other medical procedure with a similar failure rate would be carefully monitored, the need to vindicate RU-486 as “safe and effective” means mothers are packed up and sent home with little regard for the risk.

“They told her it was safe and it killed her,” Monty Patterson said after his daughter’s death. Planned Parenthood owes him an explanation—and so does an FDA long overdue in re-evaluating its deadly decision.

[TRENDS]

IMBALANCE SHEET

U.S. jobs lost (2002): 909,000
Legal Immigration (2002): 1,063,700
Illegal immigration (2002): 500,000 est.

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Is Bush Seeking a “Decent Interval”?

It is no small irony that the neocons who denounced this magazine as “isolationist” when we argued against invading and occupying Iraq have left America more

isolated than ever before in its history.

We are virtually friendless in Baghdad. Our NATO allies, Brits and Poles excepted, have left us to stew in our own juice. Russia will not help. Japan will not help. The president's UN address, sandwiched as it was between speeches by Kofi Annan and Jacques Chirac, earned perfunctory applause, while they received ovations.

Were it not for our contributions that subsidize the salaries, expense accounts, and pensions of UN employees, America would be as isolated in the “international community” as Ariel Sharon.

Congressional Democrats and their national candidates have begun to scourge the president for Iraq and will extract a pound of flesh before granting his request for \$20 billion to rebuild it.

Why are they doing this? First, because voters do not want to spend billions rebuilding Iraq when our states are cutting services and raising taxes. Second, because Democrats are full of bitterness toward President Bush for stampeding them into voting for a war in which they never truly believed. Ashamed of their own cowardice, they intend to punish him for having “misled” them.

Yet, how do they answer this question: if Senators Kennedy and Byrd and Representative Kucinich and Governor Dean could stand up to the heat and say no to war in October 2002, why couldn't you?

The isolation of America, brought on by Bush's succumbing to the whispers of neocon tempters about Churchillian

immortality has narrowed his choices now to the same three that were left to LBJ and Nixon, once we had committed ourselves to Vietnam.

He can opt for the Aiken Solution, “Declare victory and get out.” He can pursue his “Bring 'em on!” policy and fight the Iraqi guerrillas into a second term. Or he can escalate, attacking what the neocons call the “terror masters” in their privileged sanctuaries: Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Each option entails great risks.

If he follows the mood and mindset of his countrymen and pulls U.S. troops out too rapidly, he risks a collapse into chaos and civil war, which could leave Iraq a haven of terrorists that it never was under Saddam and invite intervention by Turkey or Iran.

If he commits to winning the war and building a democracy, no matter the cost in blood and money, he imperils his presidency. For America never signed on for a postwar war. Moreover, Bush risks ultimate defeat. For there is no sign of a slackening of interest among the Islamic young for a *jihad* to drive the Americans from Iraq.

What of the third option: escalate and expand the war? If the president intends to pacify the Sunni Triangle and seal the roads to Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, he will need far more than the 130,000 U.S. troops currently in country. A U.S. war on Syria would also inflame the Arab world and be supported by no nation save Israel. And what would the overthrow of President Assad's regime accomplish,

other than to give us 17 million sullen Syrian adoptees to go with our 50 million Iraqis and Afghans, the cost of whose day care is constantly rising?

Faced with the three options, each of which entails risks, the president appears to have decided—not to decide.

While understandable, this does not solve his problem, which is this: his present policy is unsustainable. Public support is declining, congressional support is declining, and his poll ratings are declining. If the president intends to fight this war to victory, he must begin to speak and act like a war leader, demanding sacrifices of us all, telling us how and when we can look forward to a triumphal end to the conflict. This President Bush has conspicuously failed to do.

Indeed, his actions—going back, hat in hand, to a UN he called “irrelevant” to ask for help in reconstituting Iraq, going to allies he and Rumsfeld dismissed as “Old Europe” to ask for troops, telling the nation we will transfer power to Iraqis as soon as possible—all point to the Nixonian solution of Iraqization and withdrawal. Back out of the bar with both guns blazing.

In Kevin Costner's “Thirteen Days” about the Cuban missile crisis, Gen. Curtis LeMay says to JFK, as word comes the missiles are going operational, “Mr. President, you've got a problem.”

“No, General,” Kennedy retorts, “We have a problem.”

The president's problem in Iraq is the result of an unnecessary war. But it is our problem now. Solution: admit the mistake, turn around, get out with all deliberate speed. We liberated Iraq from Saddam, but the future of Iraq is for them to decide, not us. ■

[straight talk]

Disoriented

Caught between foppishness and brutishness, Americans struggle to recapture masculinity.

By Steve Sailer

EVERY YEAR, Americans coin countless clever words and phrases, the vast majority of which soon sink into oblivion. A few appeal to the press's obsessions and become almost omnipresent. Last year, it was "jump the shark," which, for reasons too tedious to repeat, describes the point at which a TV series begins to decline. This year, it's "metrosexual," a term coined back in 1994 to refer to a man who likes the finer things in life, yet who is (surprise!) a heterosexual. It leapt into media prominence with a June 22 *New York Times* article called "Metrosexuals Come Out."

In the distant past, a man who dressed stylishly and enjoyed art, theater, and sophisticated music would have been praised as a "gentleman," but today his sexual orientation is automatically called into question. The average person's "gaydar" has become so sensitive that a long list of traits associated with civilized living are now assumed to be *prima facie* evidence of homosexuality.

Journalists love to use the word "metrosexual" in articles about the season's other sensation, the Bravo channel's makeover show "Queer Eye for the

Straight Guy," in which five witty gay men refine (no doubt only temporarily) some straight slob's entire look and lifestyle. Of course, the underlying assumption of "Queer Eye" is not that metrosexuals are abundant but that they are scarce.

Is there really a trend among America's straight guys toward acting like elegant homosexuals as the hype implies? Do the young men of America want to grow up to be Frasier and Niles Crane?

sexual orientation is doubted was captured in the classic "Seinfeld" episode in which Jerry strenuously denies being gay but feels socially obliged to protest his own protest by repeatedly interjecting, "Not that there's anything wrong with that!"

As previously clueless straight guys develop more precise gaydars, are they instead fleeing everything sophisticated? Will the word "metrosexual" and shows like "Queer Eye" just speed the

AS PREVIOUSLY **CLUELESS STRAIGHT GUYS** DEVELOP MORE PRECISE GAYDARS, ARE THEY **FLEEING EVERYTHING SOPHISTICATED**?

Or is the opposite happening? The *Times* article claimed that metrosexuals (also known as "fauxmosexuals" and, due to their love of shopping, "buysexuals") like being mistaken for gay, but that must be a minority taste, to say the least. These days, nobody wants to be called a "homophobe," but the intense discomfort most modern men feel when their

process until coarseness becomes the defining characteristic of nearly every heterosexual man?

I've been trying to find all these metrosexuals I keep reading about. There were 40,000 people at a Bruce Springsteen concert I attended at Dodger Stadium recently, but I sure didn't see any metrosexuals.

I turned on the TV and everybody on the news was talking about Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is not, I suspect—even though he dresses neatly and combs his hair—a metrosexual.

I switched to a dating show, and the male contestants were wearing untucked T-shirts and looking like they shave only on those random days when their moms call to remind them.

On a talk show, there was poor Brad Pitt, still terrified of being thought a pretty boy. I knew a blind guy who dressed and groomed himself better than that slovenly star does. These days, apparently a man has to be as secure in his masculinity as Arnold to put on a sports coat when going on national television.

Sports jackets have endured for decades because they originated as military tunics cunningly designed with padded shoulders, nipped-in waists, and enough length to hide a spreading posterior and to make even pear-shaped officers look like intimidating specimens of martial might.

I've been wearing sport coats ever since my fashion sense permanently congealed during the first Reagan administration. Yet this manly classic now seems too metrosexual for young men to wear.

THE TONY AWARDS CEREMONY INCREASINGLY LOOKS LIKE AN INDOOR GAY-PRIDE PARADE.

One 60-degree evening last spring at the glitzy Hollywood and Highland entertainment complex where the Academy Awards are held, my wife and I decided to count what younger guys were wearing. We found nobody under 40 wore a sports coat. And only one-fifth of the guys under 30 who were out on dates even bothered to tuck in their shirts.

Why do straight guys these days try to impress girls by dressing like Jack Klugman playing Oscar Madison?

A young software developer explained to me, "For the single man on a date it is important to give the impression that he didn't try very hard to look good. This is critical to indicate alpha male status. The untucked shirt can help here."

You used to be able to count on black men to dress like grown-ups. It was always a pleasure to watch Michael Jordan and his sidekick Scottie Pippen emerge from the locker room after a game and conduct interviews in zillion-dollar suits that combined understatement and snazziness in perfect balance. They took seriously the celebrity's duty both to entertain and elevate the public's taste. But now that the thug look has spread from hip-hop to basketball, Allen Iverson and his colleagues are as edifying a sight as a police lineup.

And how about the hot new cars? A dozen years ago, there was a wave of beautiful sports cars with flowing curves, such as the Mazda Miata. Since then, however, the general trend has been toward ever more masculine, even brutalitarian SUV designs, like the Hummer and those squared-off militaristic jobs, such as the Mercedes-Benz G500,

that look like a Brinks armored car crossed with a rhinoceros. And then there are those new boxes on wheels, such as the Honda Element, that are designed to evoke a college boy's dorm room. (Just add empty pizza cartons.) The hilariously homely new Toyota Scion bears a striking resemblance to Dumpy the Dump Truck in the little boy's storybook. I guess the appeal is:

"Nobody's gonna think I'm gay when I'm driving one of these monstrosities!"

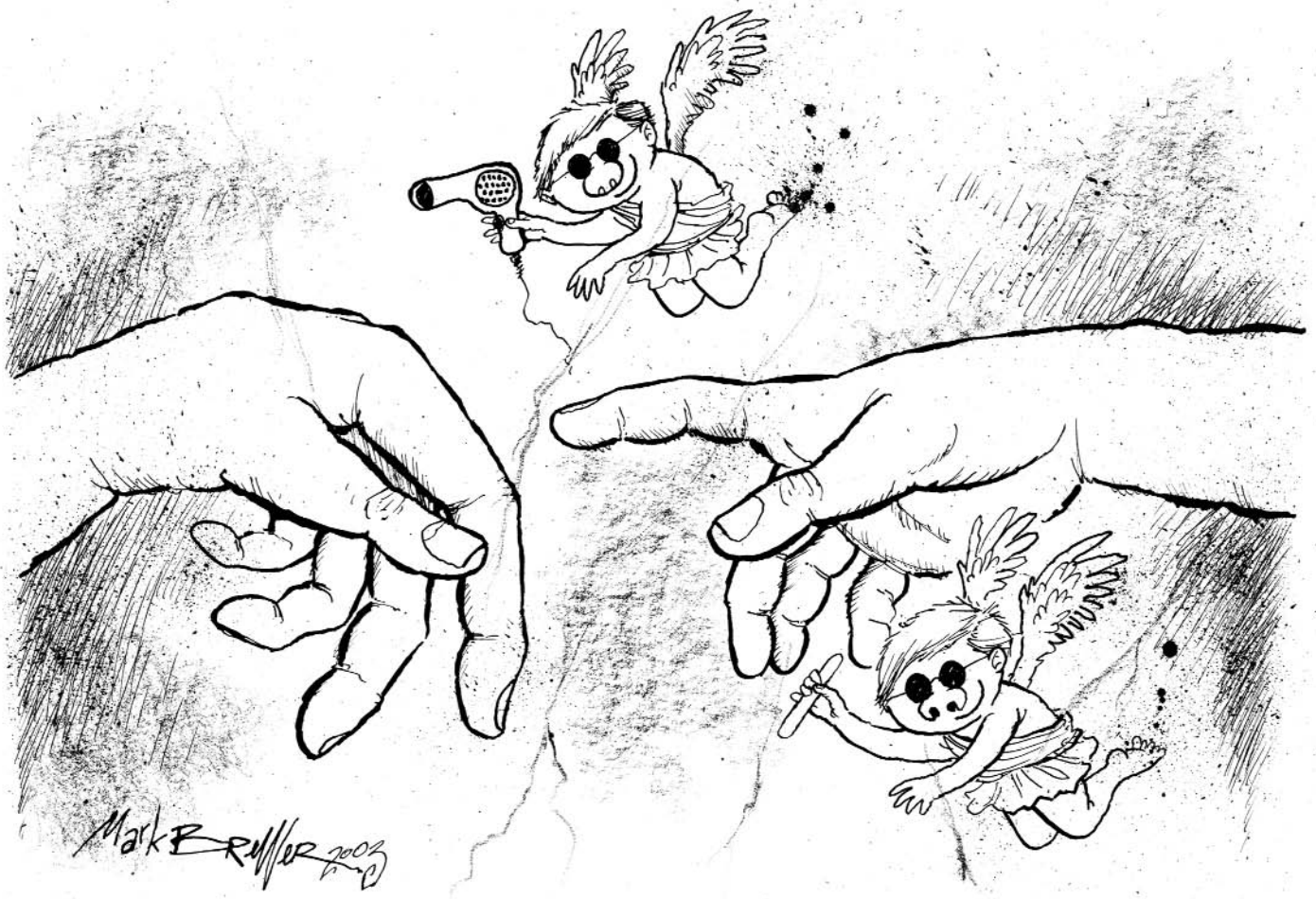
I don't care all that much about how men dress or what the cars they drive look like. But I do care about the survival of the upper reaches of arts and culture, and that is increasingly endangered by gay ghettoization and what journalist John Derbyshire calls "straight flight."

Consider theater. Pundit Mark Steyn recently wrote of "the difference between the Broadway of Rodgers and Hammerstein and the Broadway of Stephen Sondheim":

The former was the great central thoroughway of American popular culture, the latter is a shriveled little self-regarding gay ghetto. Don't get me wrong, I love show tunes—and, as a result, I'm always assumed to be gay. I don't particularly mind that—I bought some Judy Garland DVDs in New York the other week and the guy was all flirty with me, which girl salesclerks hardly ever are these days. But a lot of chaps aren't so keen on that sort of thing, and eventually institutions reach a kind of gay tipping point after which straight men just steer clear. The Broadway of Stephen Sondheim may be, as its admirers claim, better, sharper, more sophisticated, but it's also underattended.

Thus, the Tony Awards ceremony increasingly looks like an indoor gay-pride parade. One of the big winners this year was "Take Me Out," about a gay baseball player and included three locker room shower scenes.

Obviously, there is a lot of gay talent on Broadway, but there isn't enough to compensate for the huge decline in straight participation. That's a big reason why the quantity and quality of Broadway plays has declined so dramatically, or even theatrically.



MARK BREWER

Somewhere out there are straight youths with the gifts to become the next Richard Rodgers, Bob Fosse, and Gene Kelly, but they aren't going to go into musical theater now that all their buddies know the score about Broadway. Instead, they will show off their straightness by dressing like slobs and listening to gangsta rap. When they grow up, they will go to Hollywood instead and help make movies about blowing stuff up and then buy yellow Hummers with their huge paychecks.

The aristocratic and religious arts that make up the high culture of Western Civilization were part of a thousand-year project to restrain and redefine the unbridled masculinity of all those Conan the Barbarians who poured into the old Roman Empire at the beginning of the Dark Ages. The aptly named Vandals

and their cohorts were slowly converted into knights, who were supposed to know not only how to fight, but also how to appreciate the finer forms of music, painting, sculpture, theater, dance, conversation, and dress.

Inevitably, the arts attracted a higher proportion of male homosexuals than did fighting, hunting, or plowing. But nobody particularly noticed because all attention was focused on matters of class. If you wanted your family to move up in society, you (or your children) needed to learn something about the arts.

Because we Americans claim to be a classless society, the social pressures to study the traditional aristocratic arts were always less in America and are declining even more. Ballet schools, for example, need male dancers to partner

all the little girls who want to be ballerinas, but they have given up on finding enough American boys. Instead, they try to recruit lads from immigrant families from more class-ridden lands that are attracted to the old snob appeal of ballet.

If James Bond were introduced today, the *New York Times* would probably describe him as a metrosexual rather than as a gentleman. I fear, though, that if you called him a metrosexual, he would make a witty quip, flick some invisible dust from his perfectly tailored lapels with his manicured hands, and shoot you. ■

Steve Sailer is AC's film critic, a reporter for UPI, and a columnist for VDARE. Copyright © 2003 United Press International

[pin-up president]

Calling Cary Grant

There's more to being a man than talking tough.

By Clark Stooksbury

THE THIRD MILLENNIUM thus far is not a golden age of masculinity. The elite media herald the rise of “metrosexuals”—effete, heterosexual men who spend their spare time getting facials and pedicures and shopping for clothes. Popular culture, particularly commercials, depicts most other heterosexual males as overgrown children obsessed with fast food and soft drinks, computerized toys and televised sports.

When I long for healthy depictions of masculinity I resort to the golden age of film. In the movies from the '30s through the '50s, one can enjoy John Wayne, Burt Lancaster, Cary Grant, Humphrey Bogart, Jimmy Stewart, Clark Gable, and dozens of others. A great film for this purpose is John Ford's “How Green Was My Valley” with Donald Crisp as Gwilym Morgan, the patriarch of a Welsh coal-mining family. Crisp's character was stern and serious without being tyrannical. He commanded respect from his large family but still deferred to his wife when she put her foot down.

Neoconservatives turn to another, more up-to-date source of virility: Republican politicians. The cover of the September issue of the *American Enterprise* boldly proclaims, “Real Men: They're Back.” This theme has popped up frequently since an overwhelming number of male emergency personnel gave their lives at Ground Zero on Sept. 11.

The main feature was written by Jay Nordlinger of *National Review* who went weak in the knees over the macho men in the Bush administration—particularly the he-man at the top. Although Nordlinger extolled the president's prowess with a chain saw, he primarily praised President Bush for displaying the cheapest form of masculinity—tough talk. “He said he wanted bin Laden ‘dead or alive.’ About Saddam holdouts in Iraq, he declared, ‘Bring 'em on’—meaning our boys are ready to confront them.” Nordlinger closed by gushing over Republican manliness in an unseemly fashion. “The Democrats have to acquire a bit more testosterone if they're to compete with the GOP. ... As for the Republicans, if they had any more testosterone, they'd be the Incred-

come-hither pose. The article reported on Rumsfeld in a manner more appropriate to *People* magazine than to a respected intellectual journal. Nordlinger breathlessly revealed that Rumsfeld was a sex symbol (!) and pop-culture icon (!!): “Reports have it that people gather round to watch Rumsfeld press conferences the way they do Oprah. ... Women confide that they have ... well, un-defense-policy-like thoughts about the secretary of defense ...” Nordlinger explained that Rumsfeld was a “handsome Joe” and referred to him as the “SecDef-SexDef?”

But it isn't all about beefcake. Nordlinger was taken with Rumsfeld's forthrightness, especially in his willingness to use the word “kill.” He quoted the “SexDef” in reference to using a particu-

NEOCONSERVATIVES TURN TO A MORE UP-TO-DATE SOURCE OF VIRILITY: REPUBLICAN POLITICIANS.

ible Hulk. House Speaker Denny Hastert was a wrestling coach, for crying out loud. That's almost overkill!”

Nordlinger had previously effused over Donald Rumsfeld in the Dec. 31, 2001 issue of *National Review*. The cover was a low point for a once serious magazine, featuring a caricature of a smiling Rumsfeld mimicking a Betty Grable,

lar kind of ordnance, “[T]hey are being used on frontline al-Qaeda and Taliban troops to try and kill them.” He is so enamored with this quote that he recycled it in the *American Enterprise*, even to the point of reusing his follow up line, “Oh.”

Of course, the immediate post-Sept.-11 period was a special time. The U.S. had won what appeared to be a clear-cut vic-

tory in Afghanistan, and unity was still the watchword. Today the clarity is gone. The failure to capture bin Laden and the apparent re-emergence of the Taliban and Islamic extremism have soured the victory in Afghanistan. On the Iraqi front, the emergence of a guerilla resistance that is nickel-and-diming away the lives of young American men on an almost daily basis, as well as launching terrorist attacks against international targets, has undermined the feel-good atmosphere created by a quick victory. President Bush recently displayed the unique ability manfully to proclaim progress in Iraq the day after terrorists bombed Jordan's embassy and guerillas killed two U.S. soldiers. Unbowed, Nordlinger is still swooning.

The September *American Enterprise* was doubtless conceived in those heady days of early May when the dominant image of President Bush was his emergence from that S-3B Viking jet onto deck of the *Abraham Lincoln*. In the aftermath of that stunt, former Dan Quayle flunkie Lisa Schiffren effused in the *Wall Street Journal* over the president's raw, macho, sex appeal. "After a long day of hauling the kids to playdates and ballet, I turned on the news. And there was the president, landing on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln, stepping out of that fighter jet in that amazing uniform, looking—how to put it?—really hot." Since then, it has not been unusual to see neocons and Republicans snidely ask if anyone could imagine Ted Kennedy—who served in the Army and played college football—pulling off a similar landing. As if there were no more plausible Democratic candidates (such as former Navy pilot Tom Harkin) for such a performance.

Prior to George W. Bush, the preferred neocon tough guy was Newt Gingrich. The first issue of the *Weekly Standard* in 1995 featured a caricature of the then

House Speaker as a guerilla warrior, swinging from a rope above a flaming Capitol and spraying an Uzi. Inside, one of the articles on the Speaker, "Scenes From A Speakership," covers Gingrich as if he were in a war zone, barking com-

mands and arguing strategy with his lieutenants. Months later Fred Barnes, in an article on conservative and liberal sports in the magazine's "casual" column (a neocon's idea of loosening his tie and being "casual" is to politicize all aspects of life), described conservative sports as being "tough, individualistic, obsessed with winning, just as Newt Gingrich is in politics." Barnes wrote as if Gingrich were the Marlboro Man, ropin' steer out on the range, instead of spending most of his adult life in collective institutions such as the academy and the Congress. More recently, the *Weekly Standard* has taken to featuring heroic shots of the president on its cover—one especially features the president standing in front of a group of soldiers, wearing an Army jacket captioned, "The Liberator: Baghdad ... and Beyond." To its credit, the *Standard* has not stooped to depicting Republican politicians as pinup models. The inside of the magazine is too devoted to promoting Benevolent Global Hegemony to waste much space promoting president Bush as an exemplar of either machismo or sex appeal.

I don't mean to diminish the president's masculinity. He's adept with a chain saw, and he did fly fighter jets, albeit over Texas instead of Vietnam. He carries himself well, avoiding the lip-biting obsequiousness of Bill Clinton and the petulance of Newt Gingrich. But on critical issues, such as immigration and the deficit, Bush has failed the test of leadership.

On a topic that should concern real



men everywhere—the exposure of young women and mothers in the military to the dangers of combat—the president's stand has been nothing short of wimpy. His announced position in May was that he would, instead of providing leadership, "take guidance from the United States military." A real man would step up and say, "No more Jessica Lynch." Unlike Bill Clinton, who was willing to shut the government down during a standoff with the Congress in 1995, President Bush has not even mustered the courage to wield his veto pen.

Yet he now keeps company with that ultimate paragon of masculinity—GI Joe. An outfit called Blue Box Toys has released a doll, er, action figure called "Elite Force Aviator: George W. Bush." It commemorates the May 1 landing on the *Abraham Lincoln* and comes complete with a flight suit, helmet, and a steely, square-jawed visage worthy of John Wayne. But instead of playing with a doll, those starved by the dearth of real men would do better to look backward at those men such as Gwilym Morgan, who was recalled by the narrative voice of his son at the end of "How Green Was My Valley": "Men like my father cannot die. They are with me still. Real in memory as they were in flesh. Loving and beloved forever ..." At that, even macho men will tear up. ■

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White Collar Blues

First they came for the factory workers ...

By Daniel McCarthy

ORACLE CEO Larry Ellison believes that some day in the not-too-distant future, "Silicon Valley will more closely resemble Detroit." That was his prediction at last month's OracleWorld convention in San Francisco, a prediction alluding to the steady transformation of IT—information technology—into a commodity much like an automobile, a thing to be standardized, mass-produced, and, whenever possible, sent abroad to be assembled by the cheapest available labor. Silicon Valley might not yet look like Detroit, but already IT jobs have begun to follow the well-worn path of manufacturing jobs out of this country and into the Third World.

This process of sending white-collar work overseas is called "offshore outsourcing," or simply "offshoring." It began with back-room services and technical-support hotlines that could just as easily be staffed by an Indian in Hyderabad as by an American in Houston, for just a fraction of the cost. Soon module coding and other standardized kinds of programming followed suit. Now even complex and sensitive IT projects such as systems-architecture design are being moved offshore. Not that the jobs have to go overseas for Americans to be put out of work—businesses can also avail themselves of cheap labor by importing workers, using nonimmigrant visas like the H-1B and the L-1. Either way, Americans now find themselves competing in a global IT labor market with low-wage workers from India, China, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

Mike Emmons is one programmer who has already experienced the downside of IT globalization. The 41-year-old father of two was going to lose his job at Siemens International Consulting Services in Lake Mary, Fla., in December 2002. The company had decided to outsource its entire IT department to an Indian company, Tata Consulting Services. As a condition for receiving severance pay, Siemens ICN expected Emmons and his co-workers to train their replacements. Few of the laid-off Americans could afford to turn down the money, and Emmons accepted it while he continued to look for look for a new job that would provide health insurance for a daughter with spina bifida.

He became outraged, however, when he discovered how Tata was exploiting the L-1 visa to bring in low-wage Indian workers to replace him and his colleagues. The L-1 was intended to facilitate transfers within multinational corporations and was meant to apply to workers with specialized knowledge of a particular company's products and services. But Tata was importing workers to provide general purpose IT services. Whatever specialized knowledge these workers had was what Emmons and his colleagues had taught them.

His anger galvanized Emmons into becoming an IT labor activist of sorts. He passed out fliers to local businesses, sent a mass e-mail to workers at Siemens, and lobbied his congressman, Rep. John Mica (R-Fla.) for legislation to reform the L-1. He resigned from Siemens ICN last

November, ahead of his scheduled termination, after finding another job. Since then he has continued to wage a one-man war against the use of specialist visas to replace American workers.

"There are no rules with the L-1," Emmons says. "They don't have to hire Americans, they don't have to look for Americans. They can actually come in and tell the American to train his replacement and nothing will happen. This happened with the H-1B visa as well, but nobody really stood up against it. We spoke up. We said this is wrong. If they want to move jobs abroad, fine. Get them out of here. Leave. Don't come back. I won't buy your products. But don't bring people over here to learn from Americans and then ship the knowledge back."

The lack of restrictions accompanying L-1 visas is worth emphasizing as a contrast to the nominal restrictions attached to H-1B visas, which have long been the most widely used means of importing inexpensive IT labor. H-class visas are intended to allow companies to recruit skilled foreign workers during times of domestic labor shortages. In theory, companies should only have recourse to H-1B visas when there are no qualified Americans available for a given job.

But only "H-1B dependent" employers—defined as companies whose workforce has 15 per cent or more H-1B workers—are legally bound to look for American workers before bringing in foreigners. And although H-1Bs are supposed to be paid at least 95 percent of the prevailing wage for their field, in

practice businesses can easily classify foreign workers as being less skilled than they really are, thus lowering the wage bracket for which the workers qualify. Norman Matloff, a professor of computer science at the University of California, Davis, and a leading critic of the H-1B program, says, "Prevailing wage laws are virtually meaningless."

Matloff believes that H-1B and L-1 visas pose a greater danger to American workers than offshore outsourcing. Foreign IT workers brought into the country on H-1B or L-1 visas, he argues, both suppress wages within the field by inflating the labor supply and contribute to unemployment by displacing American workers. He points to U.S. employment data that show over 100,000 programmers out of work and suggests that with many discouraged programmers going into other fields, those numbers only tell part of the story. According to Matloff's research, there are some 463,000 H-1B workers now employed in IT, while by his estimate only "about one percent of U.S. software development work" has been sent offshore.

But if offshoring has not yet become a leading cause of IT unemployment, some experts say that it soon will. The research company Gartner released a report in July that predicted that one in 10 jobs at IT providers, and one in 20 IT jobs at other firms, will be lost to offshoring by the end of 2004. A study last year by Forrester Research forecast that the service sector as a whole—not just IT—will send 3.1 million jobs overseas within the next 15 years.

Exporting jobs by outsourcing and importing workers with H-1B or L-1 visas are related phenomena. Matloff notes that "offshored projects typically include an H-1B / L-1 component as well," a point that Mike Emmons corroborates. "What these visa programs are doing is helping offshoring. In many cases the jobs couldn't otherwise be

moved out of the country. Knowledge has to be transferred. This is where Congress has come in and given these corporations the tools they need to do these knowledge transfers." When L-1 or H-1B workers return to their home countries they can use what they learned in America to set up offshore operations for more specialized software projects.

Businesses defend offshoring as a necessary measure to stay afloat in a rough economy and argue that the money saved with offshore outsourcing can be reinvested and used to prevent other workers from being laid off—or can even be used to hire more American employees. Offshoring certainly does save money, although not quite as much as some of its proponents suggest. Firms like India's Tata that specialize in providing outsourcing services to other companies hint at tremendous savings to be had from using foreign programmers who will work for less than half of what

Communications Workers of American union. Laid-off IT professionals have also lobbied Congress to restrict offshoring and reform the H-1B and L-1 visas, as well as taking their stories to local and national news media. Such activism has helped prompt the introduction of several bills in Congress in the past year to reform or eliminate the L-1 and H-1B. Even if none of the bills passes, the annual cap on the number of H-1Bs that can be issued is set to revert this month to 65,000 from the 195,000 limit established three years ago. The actual number of H-1B visas issued has also been declining, from 105,692 in 2001 to 27,199 in 2002. Figures for the L-1, on the other hand, which has no cap, have remained relatively steady over the past year.

The situation may look as if it is improving, but Mike Emmons for one is taking no chances with Congress. His experiences have convinced him that most legislators are more inclined to lis-

THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE POLITICIANS CARE ABOUT OTHER PEOPLES' JOBS IS TO MAKE THEM FEAR FOR THEIR OWN.

an American earns. But when all of the costs of setting up an offshoring project are taken into account—everything from selecting a vendor to language barriers, time-zone differences, and culture clashes—the actual savings is much smaller. *CIO* magazine reports that even a company very savvy about outsourcing might find its savings to be closer to 20 percent, rather than the 40, 50, or 60 percent that is sometimes mooted.

Needless to say, even offering savings of just 20 percent offshoring remains popular with businesses—and unpopular with American workers. Last month some 50 out-of-work programmers picketed an offshoring conference in Burlingame, Calif., a protest organized by the

ten to corporations that donate to them than to laid-off workers. He is now considering running against Representative Mica himself, having come to the conclusion that the only way to make politicians care about other peoples' jobs is to make them fear for their own. But Emmons does not see the backlash against offshoring developing into an information-age labor movement.

"The people we work with are too complacent, many of them just give up and move on to something else. Not only is our industry complacent, the American people are too. This outsourcing of jobs is just the next wave. If we don't do something about it, we're not going to have any jobs left." ■

Neo-Contradictions

Why America can't be the new Rome.

By Republicus

DURING MY MANY trips to Europe this past year, I have been confronted by one question from anxious Europeans about the sea change in American foreign policy: who are the neoconservatives?

European efforts to explain neoconservatism border on the fantastical. The common image—James Bond villains wickedly stroking white cats while their evil minions wreak havoc on a hapless world—says more about European failures to understand American policy-making than it does about neoconservatism. Somewhat contradictorily, but fully in line with European traditions, it is posited that neocons are an ignorant lot (presumably because they do not agree with the more evolved conventional wisdom of European Wilsonians) and will soon depart the foreign policy scene.

This cartoon version of the neocons' role reveals a Europe that has not done its homework. For within America's own borders, two seminal foreign policy arguments are in full blaze. Within the Wilsonian camp, Democrats are divided, as evidenced by the Congressional vote in which Senate Democrats split down the middle on whether to authorize the use of force in Iraq. On one side, the Democrats' old McGovernite wing is suspicious of the exercise of U.S. power in pursuit of American national interests. They are in conflict with the more conservative Clinton-Holbrooke Wilsonians, who tend to be more relaxed about the American use of force as long as it is sanctioned by some sort of broad inter-

national consensus. While this ideological battle has obvious long-term repercussions, as the Democrats are out of power in both the executive and congressional branches, this is more than anything an academic effort to update Wilsonianism.

The real game in town is the battle between neoconservatives and traditional realists, who see the pursuit of American national interests as the compass by which to gauge all foreign policy initiatives. The battle of ideas within the Republican Party has seen a steady victor emerge since the inauguration of the 43rd president. Over the past three years, the victors have taken the Republic for a dramatic turn, embracing an emotionally derived agenda, lacking in reason, and devoid of prudence. What is most remarkable is that so few choose to understand the rise of neoconservatism, content to ignore its implications rather than face this ambitious minority yearning to rebuild the world in its own distorted image.

At the more hawkish end of utopianism, neoconservatives see themselves as benevolent imperialists. They espouse a philosophy of universal democracy, one brought about by force of will and arms. They envision a world remade in America's likeness by the carrot of economic aid and the stick of military power. They routinely and erroneously compare the American capacity for global hegemony to Rome's, a far from an abstract mistake.

Rome's control over its world was total, and despite America's impressive military capabilities, it dominates proportionally less of the world than Trajan did. The neoconservatives are correct in their assessment of superior American military capabilities relative to the rest of the world—they regularly point out that America spends more on its military budget than the next 15 countries combined—but they fail to recognize the inherent structural differences between our world and the one dominated by Rome two millennia ago. Rome had no need for diplomacy as there were no other states—only barbarians at the gates. This is hardly the case with America. There remain other legitimate nations, many of whom will conceivably vie with the U.S. for primacy. As such, there are genuine limits to American power—limits not always recognized by neoconservatives.

The imperialists are correct in wanting to maintain superpower status and to prevent the emergence of a rival hegemon. But this is not enough to preserve American primacy. The same theorists who see the U.S. as a reincarnation of Rome forget that it was not a great rival but a host of lesser powers combined with the empire's overly peripatetic foreign policy that eroded its advantage. In their belief in unfettered power, the Romans overextended their sway, as they recognized no limits to their capabilities.

Like all utopians, neoconservatives stumble over the problem of nation building. The effort to transplant democratic ideals to foreign, frequently hostile soil is rightfully rooted in the notion that liberal democracy is the best and most just form of government. But one cannot force an individual, much less a nation, to be free. The essence of democratic government is self-rule. As Harvard's Samuel Huntington has pointed out, "[to] intrude from outside is either imperialism or colonialism, each of

which violates American values.”

Now it is true that not all advocates of nation building are crusaders. There are some who base their views on the pragmatic notion that democracies are the most stable regimes and are less likely to pose a threat to the United States. Thus it would be in the general American interest to create a world of democracies. But any regime, in order to function properly, must legitimize itself in the eyes of its people—none more so than a democracy. The growth of a viable democratic structure is an organic process, intimately connected to local culture and tradition. It arises from the bottom up; it can almost never be successfully imposed from the top down.

Successfully devising and implementing an operative overarching policy for the new era requires absolute clarity. In this spirit, it is past time to discard illusions about the international system as misguided first principles that will inevitably result in failed practices. The greatest danger comes from the schools of thought that derive their essence from Kantian utopianism and thus misread the concept of national interest, proclaiming that the American system of universal values consigns it to an open-ended and naïve foreign policy, even after the debacles of Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Haiti. This benevolent imperialism is merely Wilsonianism on steroids. It carries an underlying belief in the structural harmony of the world that can be brought about either by proper discourse or, conversely, by force.

The argument put forward by the neocons is therefore structurally incoherent. If one believes that a world of liberal democratic regimes peacefully interacting is a natural one, then there should be no need to construct it forcibly. Ultimately, imperialism of this sort strives for a totally stable world. The desire for empire is really the attempt to abolish the structural anarchy of the international

system by assimilating states into an overarching order—in this case one fully dominated by the U.S. Given that this new world must be brought about by force, however, it would be an unnatural one, doomed to disintegrate without the permanently applied pressure of the U.S.—pressure that would lead to a hyperactive foreign policy that would erode America’s superpower status.

These ideological flaws carry very practical policy dangers. One need only look at the glaring neoconservative misjudgment—that democracies will necessarily be pro-American—to see how ideological blind spots lead directly to policy failures. In fact, quite often the opposite is true. Nascent democracies generally elect strongly nationalist leaders. As the United States is rightly seen as the global ordering power, it is often the reflexive position of other nationalities to oppose us, usually to their electoral advantage.

In the 1990s, there is little doubt that a militant Islamic party, the FIS, would have won an outright victory in the second round of national parliamentary elections in Algeria. The FIS campaigned on a platform of actively supporting Arab terrorist organizations, advocating a virulently anti-American foreign policy, and pledging never to

the corrupt, anti-democratic, unrepresentative regimes of Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia are the most pro-American. It is the Arab street that is far more violently opposed to Washington. This is the circle the neoconservatives simply cannot square.

Nor is this phenomenon confined to undemocratic regimes. The AK Party in Turkey heeded the voice of its citizens by not forcing a party-line vote on the question of whether to allow American troops to open a second Iraqi front in the north. In so doing, the Turkish populace managed to do what Saddam could not: sideline the U.S. Fourth Infantry Division. It would be foolhardy to assume more democracy in Turkey would have prevented this anti-American outcome; rather democracy was the cause of it.

Further, in Europe it was President Chirac of France and Chancellor Schroeder of Germany who heeded general European public opinion, which was overwhelmingly against the war. Prime Minister Aznar of Spain and Prime Minister Berlusconi of Italy, who sided with America, chose to ignore their electorates.

This line of reasoning leads directly to the problems America is experiencing in Iraq. Rather than being hailed as liberators, as neoconservatives so confidently

VIABLE DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE IS AN **ORGANIC PROCESS**, INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO **LOCAL CULTURE**.

hold competitive elections again. In the end, it was only the determination of the Algerian armed forces to mount a coup between election rounds that curtailed the FIS domination of Algiers. Neoconservatives cannot explain this outcome.

It does, however, point out the dirty little secret at the heart of the problems in the Middle East. The fact remains that

promised, Iraqis quickly began looking at the American occupation as at best a mixed blessing. Here the U.S. is caught in a policy conundrum that directly flows from misjudgments in neoconservative thinking; if America imposes leaders on the Iraqis, it will be caught in the “imperial trap,” as any new administration will lack democratic legitimacy.

Either the U.S. will have to stay indefinitely to prop up its stooges (thus unwittingly confirming al-Qaeda's propaganda that America is trying to establish an imperium in the Middle East) or it will leave, its puppets lasting minutes, followed by a hyper-nationalist Iraqi general, very likely desiring weapons of mass destruction. Both undemocratic outcomes foretell a bleak future for American interests in Iraq.

But the more democratic outcome will redound to the benefit of Iran, making that enemy of America the strongest state in the Persian Gulf region. The more democratic a polity is established in Iraq, the more power the majority

explaining how such a massive increase in central governmental power is justified. In fact, it is more likely that the new department, rather than serving as a clearing house, will merely be another bureaucratic competitor, speeding along the sclerotic intelligence-gathering process at unacceptable cost. With total congressional abdication of the constitutional mandate jealously to guard the power to make war and peace, the presidency, already at a historical zenith in power due to the Cold War, now finds itself further enhanced.

These are not trivial concerns, and it is significant that these proto-imperial processes have been at work at a time of

can economy can long withstand such feckless spending for an imperial purpose not enthusiastically endorsed by the American public.

In addition, the rest of the world is not a *tabula rasa* on which the American foreign policy elite can write with impunity. The very act of trying to establish an empire is bound to lead to countervailing global impulses. The lack of general support for the funding of efforts for postwar Iraq is a case in point. While France, Russia, Germany, and China did not effectively stop American efforts to promote regime change, they can certainly see to it that they have no part in paying for it. Thus the United States is left spending a backbreaking \$4 billion a month in Iraq, with little sign of financial relief on the way from the international community.

The nascent coalition opposing American efforts in Iraq could well develop into something more permanent if we continue our flirtation with empire. The more the U.S. embarks upon an imperial adventure, the more likely it is to be, unwittingly, the motive force behind the establishment of a rival pole of power, desperate to halt its domination. This, in turn, will lead to the further increase in American global commitments, with their costs, both in blood and treasure.

While these long-term trends and ideological inconsistencies at the heart of neoconservatism may hasten the end of its imperial project, this should be little cause for cheer in the rest of the world. It is never a good thing when the global ordering power embarks upon ruinous policies.

The best that can be hoped for is that neoconservatism collapses quickly under its own weight and that America remembers the founding traditions that made it the envy of the world. ■

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THE REST OF THE WORLD IS NOT A *TABULA RASA* ON WHICH THE AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY ELITE CAN WRITE WITH IMPUNITY.

Shi'ites will have in Baghdad. Iraqi Shi'ites are likely to have considerable sympathy with their co-religionists in Tehran, creating the nexus of an anti-American, Shi'ite-dominated alliance between the two governments. None of this is in American interests, just as all of these problems stem from the simple but vital mistake at the heart of neoconservatism: that pro-democratic outcomes invariably serve American interests.

The Achilles heel of the neoconservative impulse is that it is also doomed to fail at home, irrespective of its disastrous consequences abroad. Empires require emperors—and domestic centralization is antithetical to principles Americans have held precious since the time of Adams and Jefferson.

With the adoption of the Patriot Act, American civil liberties are being called into question. With the establishment of the new Department of Homeland Security, the supposedly conservative Bush administration is adding a new level of bureaucratic oversight without

neoconservative domination of American foreign policy. They have yet to be much discussed, much less approved, by the American people. This lack of broad public support means that the neoconservatives must keep winning, that their policy initiatives must be endlessly successful, for they cannot rely on the rock-ribbed support of the public.

The last serious domestic consideration is as prosaic as it is fundamental: who is going to pay for all this? Intellectually serious neoconservatives, such as Max Boot, have advocated a doubling of American defense spending in order to don its imperial mantle. There is certainly no support in the rest of the country for such a proposition. In fact, in taking on new responsibilities in far-flung places, the Bush administration has presided over the end of the budget surpluses of the Clinton administration and instead has presented Congress with a \$400 billion deficit in 2003, one of the largest in American history. It is seriously unlikely that even the vibrant Ameri-

How to Rescue the Road Map

To make peace, the Palestinians need American help.

By Steven L. Spiegel

IF THE EVENTS of the past 10 years have taught us anything, it is that no autonomous state can emerge or survive where parties competing for political power have their own military forces. Can anyone imagine a recall vote in California where all the gubernatorial contenders had their own militias blowing up buses and cafés in nearby Mexico to attract more political support?

For too long, the international community has tolerated this astonishing absurdity among Palestinians, whether from Hamas and Islamic Jihad or the associates of Arafat—many of whom rely primarily on violence to achieve their goals, not only *vis-à-vis* the Israelis but toward each other as well. As Shlomo Avineri wrote in the *Financial Times* last month, “Some Palestinians say they would confront the armed militias once they achieved full independence. They are wrong. They will never achieve a coherent state if they do not monopolize the use of force now; this is the true test of nation building and leadership.”

Under Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), for the first time there was a Palestinian Authority that genuinely sought to control the violence, but the experiment failed because of a weak prime minister who could not do the job alone because the Israelis remained skeptical that he could produce (whether they were correct or engaged in a self-fulfilling prophecy is a matter of conjecture), and because the U.S.—having promised to

help, did little to make sure Abu Mazen would survive. President Bush’s road map will never succeed if he treats every Palestinian prime minister with verbal support and little else. As we have just seen, the situation will only decline into further chaos if the threat and reality of terror are not stemmed.

The problem is that the task will be much more difficult now that the first Palestinian prime minister has been forced to resign by the machinations of Yasser Arafat. Without question, the long-time Palestinian leader and obstructionist has scored a major victory. Israel threatened to oust him, or worse, and the result was a dramatic increase in his popularity. President Bush repeatedly called for new Palestinian leadership, yet at least for the moment, Arafat is

building up an alternate source of influence under the prime minister until Arafat becomes a symbolic figure comparable to Queen Elizabeth. But the administration has demonstrated little willingness to implement that strategy, and the new nominee for prime minister, Abu Alla, is even more dependent on the cagey Arafat. If we are to build him or a future successor into an effective force to offset Arafat’s venal politicking and the terrorists’ despicable acts, we need more than a few speeches and summits. We need a strategy for making the Palestinian prime minister effective.

Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Arafat only appear strong because they have not been seriously challenged. They gain from the hopelessness they create, ironically wringing their popularity from the

THE SITUATION WILL ONLY DECLINE INTO FURTHER CHAOS IF THE **THREAT AND REALITY OF TERROR** ARE NOT STEMMED.

stronger than ever. He presents a peculiar challenge: it is impossible for outsiders to oust him without the effort backfiring, but there is no one on the Palestinian scene who appears able to blunt his effective maneuvering. So he survives politically at the expense of his people and his neighbors.

President Bush has the right idea, in theory, for overcoming this dilemma: keep him there, but limit his power by

diplomatic process they have destroyed and the economy their actions have crippled. The only way to transform this nightmare is to provide a Palestinian prime minister and his government with the tools and the backing to end the violence. Their achievements will bring them popular support.

Some have suggested that the resort to violence can be controlled once individuals who have previously been members

of wayward groups are able to participate in Palestinian politics. The opposite is true. Only preventing the resort to violence will normalize Palestinian politics, just as only after Ben-Gurion destroyed Menachem Begin's forces in 1948 (in the midst of a war no less) could Begin, the Irgun leader and future prime minister, become a legitimate member of the Israeli political system.

Sen. Richard Lugar, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has advocated the possibility of a NATO protectorate in the territories. Former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk has spoken about a trusteeship for Palestine. But the real work of confronting and ending the violence must come from within. Palestinians opposed to violence must be the leaders of the anti-terror effort, even if success requires additional support from outside. This task is not hopeless and, in fact, would probably be easier than in either Iraq or Afghanistan. Palestine is a compact area where the terrorists are known, identifiable, and can be located.

But to accomplish this task, we need a Palestinian faction engaged with the United States, not an entire polity subjugated by an outside international alliance. Specifically, here's what America should do:

1. We must increase security assistance to the Palestinian Authority once a new prime minister takes office, on the condition that assistance will be translated into action. Many tasks confront the Palestinian Authority, including the discovery of illegal weapons, the destruction of ammunition stockpiles, the dismantling of the workshops for production of weapons and ammunition, and the arrest of those responsible for terrorist actions. The recent interest of Hamas operatives in another possible ceasefire is testimony to their fear of Israeli attacks and their concern that a new

Palestinian cabinet will be provided with sufficient assistance to take decisive action. Most importantly, Abu Alla or his successor should be empowered by our support to end the threat of internal and external violence once and for all.

2. The U.S. should negotiate with Israel steps toward implementing the road map, including moves on prisoners, withdrawals from areas taken during the *intifada*, dismantling of illegal outposts, and freezing of settlements. This timeline will specify the actions that Israel will take in response to specific Palestinian actions on terror. Thus both sides will know beforehand what they are gaining in return for their actions, and when it will happen. Israel has indicated it would reciprocate in response to Palestinian action against terror, and America should mediate accordingly. Instead of an eye for an eye, we need a concession for a concession.

3. We must put in place the monitors called for in the road map. America has assumed responsibility for this crucial device, something both Israelis and Palestinians insisted was a pre-requisite for any progress. So far, little has been done.

4. The military existence of Hamas must end, both in the interests of Israeli security and Palestinian independence. If the Palestinian Authority cannot execute the job of dismantling Hamas on its own, then America should lead an international effort to assist the Palestinians in this essential task. What does this mean in practice? It calls for American leadership, not necessarily American troops. The main goal is to strengthen the security muscles of the PA, to train and equip the Palestinians to take care of security on their own.

This approach should be pursued in two stages. In the first, the training of

security forces under the control of the prime minister and his cabinet must be accelerated. Today Arafat has reasserted his control over the various Palestinian security forces; even before Abu Mazen fell, he had little flexibility because Arafat controlled 75 percent of the security apparatus. If Abu Alla does not regain the minimum that Abu Mazen had, he will be a failure before his first day in office. We should not accept such a government as having sufficient authority to govern. But if Abu Alla does take office under minimally acceptable conditions, we should attempt to strengthen his forces so that they can address the terrorist threat. This will be difficult, because, as we saw under Abu Mazen, the moderates are caught between the terror and Arafat's prevention of effective steps to end it.

Therefore, if this more subdued method proved insufficient, and it probably would, then actual troops from outside must be deployed. With the approval of Israel, it is far better to have forces such as the Egyptians, Jordanians, or Turks, or perhaps Canadians, Australians, or British assisting the Palestinian prime minister than it would be to slide back into chaos. These troops would not function on their own authority; instead, they would be acting as guest police, under the leadership of the Palestinian Authority.

Dismantling the basic terrorist infrastructure is vital if the end to violence is to be sustained, and that can only be done effectively by the Palestinians themselves, not by Israel, the Europeans, the Arabs, or the Americans. But each can in its own way help ensure that the Palestinians succeed.

5. The U.S. must be fully and consistently engaged. It is worth recalling that an Israeli-Syrian disengagement deal occurred in May 1974 only because Secretary of State Henry Kissinger stayed in

the region for 33 straight days. That exact approach may not be appropriate today, but it is clear that the United States must increase its level of engagement. This can be done through deploying the monitors, through sponsoring an international force to back up the prime minister's government, and through constant, day-to-day mediation.

6. One major area in which the Palestinians require assistance is the funding by Arab governments and private individuals of Hamas and other Palestinian groups. Here the administration is correct to single out European-based, Palestinian charity groups—the charitable and military parts of the same organization cannot be truly separated. Funds are fungible, and the military wing of Hamas, for example, is more effective because of its organization's charitable activities.

7. Economic progress is essential. There are myriad actions that the United States, Israeli, Arab, and European governments can take. Israel, for example, can provide transfer of collected duties more quickly. Kuwait, Libya, and Qatar should be called on to deliver the funds they have promised to the Palestinians.

But what if Arafat continues to be successful in blunting any independent stance by a prime minister? What if the premiership becomes a revolving door that thwarts any effort to push for an effective alternative to Arafat? One reason we failed this summer is that we did not demonstrate dedicated commitment to progress at the highest levels. The Palestinians (and the Israelis) concluded that our inattention signaled a lack of interest. Whereas American successes in Iraq this spring signaled new respect for the U.S., American failures in Iraq this summer encouraged rejection of Washington's wishes.

No matter what happens in Baghdad,

the U.S. can still succeed if it is inventive and persistent. New opportunities may arise of which we must take advantage. For example, the second most popular Palestinian leader to Arafat according to the polls, Marwan Barghouty, has been in an Israeli jail for over a year. While he was indeed complicit in terrorist attacks during the first part of the *intifada*, previously he had a history of moderation. Recently, he has been a strong supporter of a ceasefire. He is a leader with whom the U.S. could work, and whom Arafat would have a difficult time defeating.

For the United States, now is the time to prove whether we are serious or not. Words can be very helpful, and the road

map is in many ways the most creative program any U.S. administration has ever presented.

But without implementation on the diplomatic, economic, and security levels, the road map will not succeed, and American policy will fail. We must dedicate ourselves to improving the situation immediately. The violence has gone on long enough. Time is not on our side if we merely contemplate our options. ■

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Captain Kerry

They all came to see Moby.

By Dana B. Vachon

I AM A 24-year-old junior investment banker. Stephanie is a 21-year-old Columbia undergraduate. We are both at a John Kerry benefit aboard the *Intrepid*. She shifts back and forth in a pair of Jimmy Choo high heels as I squeeze the final drops of life from a lime into my gin and tonic. She doesn't affect the aura of a policy wonk, and I decide to ask just what has brought her here tonight.

I do this in as flirtatious a way as possible because I am attracted to Stephanie. I bounce off of a heel, shoot her a wry smile, and tilt my head thirty degrees to the right, as if I might kiss her neck. This I plan on doing repeatedly later in the evening.

"Stephanie, I have trouble believing

that a nubile young thing like you has nothing better to do with her Thursday night than listen to John Kerry say nothing in as many words as possible. Might you be here just to listen to Moby?" She giggles. Her friends giggle. They are all just here to listen to Moby. We are all just here to listen to Moby. Even the volunteers are mostly young professionals from around New York who slapped on pins and buttons for the evening so that they too might listen to Moby.

Moby: the bald, vegan, pacifist technopomp who took the David Byrne/ Brian Eno masterpiece *My Life In The Bush of Ghosts* and updated it for Generation Y. Where Byrne and Eno created an acoustic backdrop of sound bites and

commentary against which the policies of Reagan's America could be contextualized and questioned, Moby used the same musical engineering techniques to offer a great hook-up album. Like most who enjoy it, his work is totally devoid of meaning but exciting in other, more visceral ways.

This is why the *Intrepid* was packed with young professionals sucked from Pastis and Balthazar into the belly of a decommissioned warship to give \$100 to the decommissioned warrior who would be president.

Perhaps to avoid scaring these urban effetes, or maybe to avoid upsetting Moby the pacifist, thick black sheets were draped over the paintings and exhibits paying tribute to the finer fighting moments in the history of the American navy. All aboard the HMS Disco, Captain: DJ Party Starter Kerry.

Someone rang a bell, and the 200 young urbanites were herded away from the

Child O' Mine," and "Ring of Fire" (homage to Johnny Cash), he upset 200 of his most ardent fans in New York City. He is doomed because he spent a full night hanging out on a battleship that once served meat at every meal and was used to (gasp!) fight: embarrassing stuff for a vegan-pacifist. Moreover, (and this is not new) Moby is doomed because Eminem fans keep coming to his concerts and beating him up. I looked around the room and wondered if we would be lucky enough to have some of them there so that the ghost of Johnny Cash might have vengeance for what Moby did to "Ring of Fire." No luck.

Now, John Kerry is not only doomed because his George Hamilton tan makes his face look like the death mask of Agamemnon, but also because his campaign platform has become his own political sarcophagus. No one stole the agenda-setting power of this campaign from him, he is simply playing Hamlet

Smith on the run from Big Brother Ashcroft. Yet judging from the preponderance of bankers and lawyers in the room, it was difficult to imagine anyone there having the requisite time for a personal life worth invading. Later in the evening, the fundraiser filtered out to a handful of exclusive New York night-spots, where for all of his evil, invasive power, it was clear that even the mighty Ashcroft was powerless to enforce upon the brazen, educated, and beautiful even the most elementary narcotics laws.

That was when I realized that I was doomed. Mine is a generation that cannot distinguish a political rally from a downtown lounge, a cover song from the original, an album from its inspiration. Our parents were Democrat Hippies, and we have become Meritocrat Zombies of the Ivy League who cheer like good proles for an empty candidate just so we can listen to a hypocrite bard play other people's music. Our elite educations have taught us never to judge because all is relative and therefore subjective. But what will we do if the nation ever encounters a crisis that demands values, judgments, and critical thinking? Shed a tear for the young men of Athens.

At the end of his performance with Moby, John Kerry walked into the crowd to shake our hands. The hundreds of muscles in his face did a smile for perhaps the ten-thousandth time. His lips parted to reveal a set of teeth bleached so brilliantly white that it was briefly conceivable that he had lived his entire life on soft foods. The bright lights poured watt after watt down upon him, and he moved through the crowd toward me. I offered him my laborless hand, which he grabbed, smiling. Then he walked through the crowd, holding my hand, his hair a thicket of gel and mousse, his chemically bleached teeth shining brighter and brighter. ■

Dana B. Vachon writes from New York.

I HAD A REVELATION: MOBY, KERRY, AND I ARE ALL COSMICALLY DOOMED.

cash bars toward a large stage with the American flag as a backdrop. Moby entered with a bleached-blond punk-babe from the West Village (I imagine). He stepped up to the microphone and apologetically told us that there would be no sensual techno tunes tonight. Rather, he had prepared some cover songs—and watch out because some were written by Republicans. A few minutes into the secondhand act he introduced John Kerry as The Next President of The United States.

Kerry emerged with his guitar and joined in. He had all the stage presence of the sixth member of Herman's Hermits. At this point I had a general revelation: Moby, John Kerry, and I are all cosmically doomed.

Moby is doomed because, in choosing to play "We're Not Gonna Take It," "Sweet

with issues of global importance and is consequently unable to set any agenda at all. The man who said on the eve of the Iraq war that "we need a regime change in the United States" chose to throw a fundraiser on a major U.S. aircraft carrier. The mixed messages grew ever more perplexing as he thrust a worker's fist to the crowd and promised to put an end to George Bush's ravaging of the economy. I could hear the buckles of Gucci loafers rattle in applause, as somewhere in after-hours trading the New York Stock Exchange added to its three-month rally.

Strangely, the most resonant chord that Candidate Kerry was able to strike came from his criticism of Attorney General John Ashcroft and the Patriot Act. It became clear that my generation now views itself as a collective Winston

Goodbye to Gray Flannel

Sloan Wilson chronicled mid-century manhood.

By R. Cort Kirkwood

ON MAY 25, a fine representative of American letters passed away. Sloan Wilson, author of *The Man In the Gray Flannel Suit*, *A Summer Place*, and other novels, died after a struggle with Alzheimer's Disease.

Too little note was taken of his death, although somewhat understandably. Wilson's time in the sun had passed. Thankfully, his brilliant rendition of the American Everyman, *Gray Flannel*, was republished last year by a radical outfit in New York, Four Walls Eight Windows. The company billed the book as a "damning account of the inhumanity of big business," and many view it as an indictment of conformity: a biography of the drab corporate automaton of the 1950s who lived in developments like Levittown.

It wasn't. The book is much deeper than that superficial interpretation, and Sloan Wilson was an interesting man whose life gave rise to many scenes in his novels.

He was born in Norwalk, Conn., in 1920 of wealthy parents, and after graduating from Exeter and Harvard, served during World War II in the Coast Guard. At 24, he commanded a ship in the Greenland Patrol and later was decorated for action in the Pacific. Those experiences show up in *Pacific Interlude* and another naval tale—the novel Wilson considered his finest—*Ice Brothers*. That book is the gripping story of a freshly minted Coast Guard officer who lands in a dramatic naval game of cat and mouse with the Germans. But Wilson's most notable literary feat was *Gray Flannel*, first published in 1955,

the novel that cemented the popular expression in the American argot.

In Tom Rath, the protagonist whom Gregory Peck portrayed on film, Wilson created the quintessential American hero in a novel that contemplates facing the truth, atoning for the past, and rectifying mistakes. A battle-tested former paratrooper, Rath is a writer for a philanthropic foundation, but he wants a bigger, more profitable job. He lands one running a mental-health campaign for Ralph Hopkins, president of the United Broadcasting Corporation. Writing a speech for Hopkins, an intelligent, gregarious, generous boss, Rath faces his first temptation to lie. He can't get the speech quite right. But when Hopkins and another assistant, an unctuous jackass named Ogden, craft their own execrable oratory, Hopkins seeks Rath's opinion. Concerned for his job, Rath fears telling the truth.

Early in the book, Rath's wife, Betsy, a dutiful but shrewish woman, fires a nasty salvo. "You've got no guts," she

"I think it's terrible," Rath replies.

Says Betsy, "I don't care what you tell him, but I don't like the idea of you becoming a cheap cynical yes-man." Later, she says, "You can't imagine being honest and getting a raise for it."

No, Rath can't. He faced death in war, but maybe the penalty for honesty is worse than death.

Rath's second temptation to lie occurs when he must confess a dark secret to his wife. During the war in Italy, a brief affair ended with the birth of a bastard son. Ten years later, an old war buddy tells him the woman and boy need help. These children constitute one of the unmentionable byproducts of America's interventionism and one important reason Wilson wrote *Gray Flannel*. One wonders how many of our returning heroes shouldered their paternal duty to support the children they brought into the world. How many, like Rath, faced telling a wife? This disruptive and wracking conflict with Betsy and within Rath is beautifully rendered, and it turns out the way it should.

For all the talk about conformity, Rath doesn't conform when he faces a third test, this one of his priorities.

ALTHOUGH A HARVARD GRADUATE, **WILSON DIDN'T MUCH CARE FOR THE HARVARD CROWD.**

tells her husband, a *bona fide* war hero who killed 17 men, some in hand-to-hand combat. When Rath asks Betsy's opinion of the speech and explains that maybe it isn't as bad as it seems, she brings out the truth.

"I think that's a little sickening," she declares. "What do you really think of that speech?"

Granted, Rath must conform in some sense to succeed. At the beginning of the book, Rath is obsessed with earning more money. Thinking of Hopkins, he asks himself, "What did a man have to be like to make so damn much money?"

Rath finds out. You must be willing to sacrifice family. Hopkins is estranged from his wife and daughter and barely

knew his son, who was killed in the war. To justify wrecking his life, he erupts in a testy spiel about the kind of men who build a corporate colossus like UBC. They aren't men like Tom Rath, who trundle home to a wife and passel of noisy brats at 5 p.m.

In the end, Rath turns down success for something more important: his family. Thus is *Gray Flannel* penetrating social commentary, and its principal theme, honesty, is unfortunately all too often lost upon its readers.

A *Summer Place* is a novel about truth as well. It tells the story of Bart and Sylvia Hunter and Ken and Helen Jorgenson, and their children, John and Molly. Racy for the 1950s, it features rough sex and adultery, but the frank depictions are not pornographic.

Sad and disturbing, *A Summer Place* candidly demonstrates what results when carnality rules common sense and trumps fidelity, when people succumb to temptation and cannot control vices—and not just the sexual kind. It wrecks not only their lives, but also the lives of their children and relatives.

Throughout the book, Wilson deftly describes what we all think and feel at one time or another. In one passage, he writes about the temptation to judge by appearance. The snooty residents of Pine Island, Maine, the novel's setting, worry about the alluring beauty and sensuality of teen-age Sylvia:

Perhaps the girl should be run in for disturbing the peace. It was not socially acceptable to be that pretty, really, [and only] chorus girls and models and hat-check girls had figures of that sort ... There was a lushness about her, a sensuousness. ... [T]here was that about her which immediately make people interested in knowing whether she was chaste. ... Old ladies peered at her sharply over their knitting, and

middle-aged men stared at her musingly, and the mothers of errant boys worried. She couldn't be chaste and look like that.

The author amusingly describes the many petty prejudices of Ken Jorgenson's in-laws. "Now let's see," he says about his mother-in-law, for whom he buys a home,

[W]e are seeking a neighborhood where there are no Jews, no Polish people, no Italians, no Negroes, no children, no Catholics. ... She was against the Chinese, and it seemed, all Orientals. The Russians she hated with patriotic zeal. The English she thought snobbish, the French immoral, the Germans brutal, and all South Americans lazy. Category by category, she closed humanity out.

A Summer Place details seven horribly tortured and perhaps ruined lives and ends with Molly's teen pregnancy and shotgun marriage, all of which flow from the roiling headwaters of Ken and Sylvia's adultery and divorces.

This writer, who tragically lost his mind at the end, was a thoughtful, learned man. How many novelists today create characters that write love letters in Latin?

I was lucky enough to meet Sloan Wilson, variously a newspaperman, English teacher, and Rath-like middle manager at Time-Life, but only over the phone. I had e-mailed a request to read my first novel. At the time, Alzheimer's had recently commenced its determined, destructive march through his gray matter. But he could still speak coherently. In a raspy, high timbre, he told me a few engrossing and amusing tales about his life that wound up in his novels, including the near-paralyzing seasickness aboard his Coast Guard ship and, famously, the scene in which Tom Rath applies for his

job at United Broadcasting. Wilson got the idea for the title, by the way, by observing that men in the '50s, trundling to work in New York on the subway, all seemed to wear the same thing.

During Rath's job interview before meeting Hopkins, an underling gives Rath a blank sheet of paper and tells him to write his autobiography. End it, the corporate factotum commands, by finishing the following sentence: "The most significant thing about me is ..." Wilson had a similar experience when he applied at Time-Life. Regrettably, I didn't take notes of our conversations, but I recall that he didn't think much of Henry Luce, monarch of the magazine empire.

Wilson's parents called their vacation home the "summer place," and Harvard and the Ivies recur in his books, along with his infatuation with sailing and the sea. Unsurprisingly, later in life Wilson lived on the sea for a time and settled on a shoreline property in Colonial Beach, Va.

A dashing-looking fellow in his youth, Wilson was born of that cohort fired in the kiln of World War II. They were steady, strong men who returned home to build the American middle class. They were men like Tom Rath, heroes all the more extraordinary because they were ordinary. As Wilson wrote of his comrades in the dedication of *Ice Brothers*, "[T]hey'll never have to wonder if they're men."

Although a Harvard graduate, Wilson didn't much care for the Harvard crowd, and the value of his works lies in his candid observations not only about human nature and behavior, but also the wages of mendacity, weakness and fear, and conversely, those of honesty, strength, and moral courage.

A great artist, someone once told me, always reveals truth. Great writers also. To that category, add Sloan Wilson. ■

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[Lost in Translation]

Enter Sofia

By Steve Sailer

SOFIA COPPOLA'S "Lost in Translation," starring the melancholy and mordant Bill Murray, delivers, among other pleasures, a wonderfully nasty tribute to the satirical travel writing of Evelyn Waugh in time for the 100th anniversary of his birth on Oct. 28.

Murray plays an aged, downhearted, and jet-lagged action-movie star, a cross between Bruce Willis and himself. He is killing time in a Tokyo Hyatt between making a whiskey commercial under a long-winded but incomprehensible Japanese director and being interviewed by the "Johnny Carson of Japan," who turns out to be more like the Pee-Wee Herman of Mars.

It's hard to imagine what the poor Japanese have done since, oh, 1946 to justify Coppola's malicious obtuseness. She mocks them for speaking an inscrutable foreign language, for saying "lip" when they mean "rip," and for being just plain short.

The film's ethnic derision would be sophomoric if Coppola's script wasn't so sharp and, in Murray's expert hands, so funny. Murray has reached the point in his career where in an absurd situation he doesn't have to say anything sardonic—he merely hints at one of his famous facial expressions, and we mentally fill in the blank for him.

So he's got that going for him, which is nice because over the years he's lost much of his energy as his sadness has

deepened. The tragedy of comedy is that as many of its greatest practitioners (such as Murray and Waugh) age, their depression and misanthropy come to the fore.

Coppola's script deftly exploits an insight of Waugh and the even grumpier Paul Theroux: the secret to entertaining travel writing is elegantly to fail to figure out why those perplexing natives do the inexplicable things they do.

In impoverished Ethiopia, for example, a man boasted to Waugh in "very obscure English" that his businessman uncle had some sort of "monopoly," but Waugh couldn't understand what kind. In this situation, James Michener, an admirable man but a mediocre artist, would have diligently found a translator, and probably organized a debate over whether Ethiopia needed its own Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Waugh, however, complacently declared himself baffled because "monopoly" seemed to be "a perfectly adequate description of almost all commercial ventures in Abyssinia."

Coppola expertly captures the oddly decentering effect of modern business travel. The hotel seems dispiritingly like every other downtown luxury hotel in the world, yet its Japanese idiosyncrasies just make it even more disconcerting to Murray.

Because Japan doesn't import many Third-World immigrant workers, the Japanese have robotized many service jobs, which takes some getting used to. Murray's drapes fling themselves open in the morning, and in the empty hotel gym, he finds himself in the clutches of an unstoppable and hyperactive exercise machine shouting indecipherable and no doubt deranged commands at him.

He can't talk to the locals, can't navigate the streets, and can't fathom the peculiar television fare (except for his

old movies, which have been dubbed into Japanese). He can't calculate an appropriate hour to call his resentful wife in America and can't find the words to make her understand what he's undergoing.

Another gloomy guest is a privileged but purposeless young woman, who is fresh out of Yale with a philosophy degree, played by Scarlett Johansson. "Lot of money in that racket," Murray supportively comments after meeting her in the Hyatt's lavish bar. She's tagging along after her husband, a workaholic fashion photographer who has been instructed to make nerdy Japanese bands "rook more lock and loll."

Her husband seems more interested in a ditzy Cameron-Diaz-lookalike in town to promote her new kung-fu movie with Keanu Reeves. Viciously, Coppola has the Diaz character (who has checked into the Hyatt under the name "Evelyn Waugh" without realizing Waugh was a man) burble, "Everybody thinks I'm anorexic, but I'm not. My dad, though, is anorexic. See, he was captured at the Bay of Pigs, and Castro tortured him with food."

Murray and Johansson find themselves increasingly drawn together, apparently by their mutual refusal to be culturally enriched by their all-expenses-paid sojourns in one of the world's great cities.

As they share inarticulate confidences about their dreary marriages and visit a karaoke bar where they sing Pretenders and Elvis Costello classics, their funk lifts. Johansson eventually even allows herself to be charmed by the sight of a traditional wedding in Kyoto.

But are the feelings of the 52-year-old Murray for Johansson (who in real life is only 18) erotic or avuncular? Some have proclaimed "Lost in Translation" to be a classic romance in the tradition of David

Lean's "Brief Encounter." Others may find their relationship creepy.

Fortunately, American movies have become much more conservative about sex over the last few years, and both groups will find the unconsummated ending poignant. ■

Rated R merely for yet another pointless strip-club scene.

Steve Sailer is AC's film critic and a reporter for UPI.

BOOKS

[*The Book Against God*, James Wood, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 272 pages]

Prodigal Son

By J. P. Zmirak

THIS NOVEL IS an unexpected delight. *The Book Against God* reads almost as if Evelyn Waugh were alive again, and had decided to write in his graceful, fluid prose about one of Walker Percy's heroes: the distracted, contemporary sons of comfort whose search for religious meaning is indirect, halting, and thoroughly believable. Wood speaks in the voice of Thomas Bunting, a youngish, intellectual skeptic religiously obsessed with *disproving* the existence of God. Bunting is not a conventional unbeliever. As the son of a jovial, learned, and blissfully confident Anglican vicar, Bunting wrestles continually with God—leaving his dissertation to molder, ignoring his beautiful wife, forgetting to bathe, smoking incessantly, and spending his days ensconced with stacks of theological works, scribbling refutations in a notebook. The latter he calls his "Book Against God," or "BAG," which he intends to craft into a comprehensive critique of Christian faith—a counterpart to the grand apologetic Pascal once hoped to write.

Pascal couldn't finish his work; he left behind instead the luminous notes we

call *Pensées*. Nor does Bunting complete his *magnum opus*—at least not in the form he'd intended. The novel, which he narrates, is what he produced instead, and it's far more compelling than the short fragments of counter-theology from the original project that appear occasionally in the story.

Full of wry observations about contemporary life and mores, and unwitting self-revelations, the tale Bunting tells of himself rings with psychological truth and carries the reader along in sympathy with a protagonist one might expect to dislike: a spoiled, self-destructive intellectual idler in a dirty silk dressing gown. Our fondness for Bunting at first is only what we'd feel for a loveable rogue, someone who for a while "gets away" with breaking the rules that bind most of us, whose jabbing wit keeps us entertained.

But Woods is stalking bigger quarry, and he wields his considerable talents to make Bunting particular and plausible—while still serving an allegorical purpose. Step back, and one can see in Bunting a figure of modern Western man—an unwounded, pouting Prometheus whose only fire is a cigarette, too caught up in the ruins of his childhood to father any offspring of his own. In the book's most telling scene, Bunting risks dooming his marriage by deceiving his wife in order to avoid conceiving a child.

The story itself is fairly straightforward, although its chronology twists and turns according to the narrator's reticence: Bunting, the gifted son of benevolent (if sometimes inattentive) parents, drifts through an undistinguished academic career and into a marriage—which he proceeds to starve with neglect and poison with compulsive lies. He fails to complete his Ph.D., flubs freelance assignments, spends himself into penury, and ends up leading a solitary, almost ascetic existence—with only his old expensive tastes, the memory of fine meals, and a few pairs of fancy shoes to attest his devout worldliness. Throughout most of the story, Bunting hides his religious doubts from his priest father—a man he loves with childish devotion

tainted by adolescent rebellion. In fact, from a blankly psychological perspective, here is the nub of Bunting's problem: he never completed that rebellion, never summoned the nerve to state his doubts and differences openly and forge for himself an independent, adult identity. Instead, he sneaks around like a smart but dirty-minded 13-year-old, a perpetually impure altar boy. When his marriage collapses, Bunting even returns to his childhood home, where for months he sleeps in, lets his mother cook for him, and hides from his father his liquor bottles and irreligious books. The suspense that drives the book—and it's a surprising page-turner—is whether (and how) Bunting will ever amount to anything more.

In his explicit reflections on whether God exists—and if so, whether He is good or simply powerful—Bunting follows the well-worn path trod by Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, and other precursors of existentialism. His favorite objection to God's existence is the widespread evil and suffering in the world. When arguing with his mildly theistic friends, Bunting invokes these phenomena—from the casual cruelty of a tavern keeper towards his bartender, to grand-scale evils such as genocide—arguing passionately that a God who loved us as sons would never permit all this. When he finally, towards the end of the book, raises this argument to his father—in a wrenching, touching scene—he receives an intriguing answer. It comes in two parts.

First, the Rev. Peter Bunting points out, "[I]f you take God away from the world, the world is no less horrid, no less painful or sinful or unsaved. It is simply painful and sinful *without God*, without the hope of salvation or succour." In other words, the rebellion against God, fueled (it seems) by compassion, ends by undermining the grounds for empathy and hope. Depose God, and you begin to make of man a beast. (As another character observes, the behavior of anti-religious governments from 1789 through 1989 seems to bear this out.) This argument

doesn't move Thomas much; he has little experience of personal suffering and not much genuine sympathy for those who do. Throughout the book, his protests about the evils of human suffering are belied by his lack of interest in suffering humans. He doesn't give to beggars, offer needed help even to friends, or concern himself with the needs of his own wife. (He never washes a dish.) It's clear that Thomas invokes the problem of evil mostly as a debater's tactic.

Father Bunting's second answer strikes closer to the heart of the matter. As the priest explains,

[T]he creation of something out of nothing is an act of love. *Even* the creation of pain, the creation of evil. For this reason: we do not know why evil exists. We do not know the largest scheme of things, we cannot know God's plan. We know that evil is evil. But do we know that the *existence* of evil is evil? Do you see my point? In other words, do we know what evil exists *for*? We do not. And this is for the same reason that we do not know what the opposite of evil exists for. Why does goodness exist? Why happiness? ... And life is love. That we would rather be alive than dead, even if life is painful, is proof that there is more love in the world than pain.

Here the old man has discerned what really troubles his son—and, by extension, Western man: the problem of goodness. (It's telling that religious faith is stronger in the Third World than in the West; suffering seems less an obstacle to belief than comfort and leisure.) From his youth, Thomas has felt bitterly inadequate beside the towering figure of his father—a sophisticated believer, a kind-hearted wit, a faithful, beloved priest. Unable to resolve his ambivalence, Thomas allows it to form his stance towards the world. He becomes, as it were, the accuser, always looking for the worm in the apple, the poisoned apple in the garden. Faced repeatedly

throughout his life with the fruits of abundant goodness—a generous family, loyal friends, abundant leisure, and a beautiful, amazingly forgiving wife—Bunting is overwhelmed and appalled. The very plenitude of creation and the magnanimity of other souls fill him with anxiety and resentment—a reaction that recalls Sartre's hero Roquentin in *Nausea*, who sees the beautiful objects of nature as

soft, monstrous masses, all in disorder—naked, in a frightful, obscene nakedness ... All these objects ... how can I explain? They inconvenienced me; I would have liked them to exist less strongly, more dryly, in a more abstract way, with more reserve.

By the end of the book, Bunting is forced to admit to himself that it is goodness that he dreads and plenitude, not emptiness, that threatens him. That all through his life he has taken refuge from the particular goodness that surrounded him everywhere—from his parents' patience to his wife's almost inexplicably enduring love—in abstract negations, pursued to preserve his desolate, solitary "freedom." (Recall Sartre's infamous assertion that man's freedom consists in his "nothingness" in the face of suffocating, inert "being.") Bunting even botches an attempt by his wife to reconcile, abstracting himself from the romance of the moment in pursuit of a dry, theoretical point.

As he contemplates what's left of his life, Bunting turns once again to the pastoral idyll of his childhood, wondering aloud what ruined this Eden, what introduced the "worm" into the garden. In bringing his hero back to this primal scene, Woods has made of Bunting a figure of Adam, the archetypal man who—once in the past, and ever again—chooses his own will over God's, an empty "liberty" over happiness. ■

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[From *Union to Empire: Essays in the Jeffersonian Tradition*, Clyde N. Wilson, Foundation for American Education, 357 pages]

Jefferson's Legacy

By Thomas E. Woods Jr.

THERE ARE FEW more reviled symbols among establishment Left and Right today than the Confederate battle flag. The flag's most vocal opponents are the usual vandals and opportunists, from neoconservatives to the NAACP, for whom the Jacobin eradication of historical symbols seems healthy and normal rather than inhuman and Orwellian.

The strange fanaticism behind the campaign to remake politically incorrect state flags and to remove symbols and statues evocative of the Southern Confederacy is something relatively recent. Earlier this year, Professor Clyde Wilson reminded attendees at a Confederate Memorial Day service,

Franklin D. Roosevelt was not afraid to be seen in the same place as our battle flag. Neither was Harry Truman, nor Jimmy Carter, nor Ronald Reagan. If you will look at the magazines and newsreels from World War II (and later wars) you will see the Confederate battle flag flying over the tents of American fighting men in the Pacific and painted on American fighting planes, and even appearing in Hollywood versions of the war.

Today, on the other hand, even a Republican president, when he was governor of Texas, had two Confederate plaques removed from a state building in the dead of night in order to save his presidential campaign any potential embarrassment. Likewise, his vice president recently refused to attend a funeral in South Carolina if the Confederate battle flag were to be present or "Dixie" played. And these are very far from the

only cases of self-described conservative Republicans fleeing from Southern symbols that caused the most famous Democrats of the past century no apparent unease. Liberalism presses forward, and self-described conservatives retreat—if only the occasional surprise could periodically interrupt this drearily predictable routine.

Professor Wilson's beautifully crafted and much-discussed remarks on that Confederate Memorial Day are easily retrieved on the Internet. With the publication of *From Union to Empire*, 74 more of Professor Wilson's essays have now become available. A long-time professor of history at the University of South Carolina, author or editor of some 30 books, and editor of the 28-volume *Papers of John C. Calhoun*, Wilson can boast very impressive academic credentials.

Happily included in this volume is Wilson's 1969 essay, "The Jeffersonian Conservative Tradition," which has had an important influence on my own thinking ever since I came across it in college while flipping through old copies of *Modern Age*. Wilson's aim here is to identify as the *fons et origo* of American conservative thought not Alexander Hamilton but Thomas Jefferson. For some this line of argument may come as a surprise and perhaps not a welcome one. The Sage of Monticello still has his

conservative enemies, who allow their unease with Jefferson's religious views or one or another of his political positions to obscure his genuinely valuable political thought—as if a man with whom we disagree even on matters of great importance cannot have anything at all to teach us.

Wilson suggests that Jefferson's defense of local self-government, as well as his support for weak executive and judicial branches, represented an organ-

guished himself as far more of a conservative than arch-Federalist Alexander Hamilton—who, according to Russell Kirk, did not qualify as a conservative.

Especially relevant today is Jefferson's understanding, shared by most everyone at the time, that the First Amendment was a *restriction* on the power of the federal government, not a grant of power. It prevented the federal government from establishing a national religion, but it did not grant power to

JEFFERSON DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF AS FAR MORE OF A CONSERVATIVE THAN ARCH-FEDERALIST ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

ic development of the American political tradition, while the centralizing Federalists sought to burden that tradition with dangerous innovations and contrivances in the name of stability and order.

Jefferson defied the spirit of the age, obsessed as it was with justifying the unitary state theorized by Hobbes, by insisting on the mechanisms necessary to preserve a federal structure based on states' rights—including, in the last resort, state nullification of federal legislation and even secession.

(As for Jefferson's religion, Wilson reminds us, "[C]ontrary to a widespread but apparently ineradicable impression, Thomas Jefferson was a more religious man than his 'conservative' enemies Hamilton and Adams, who gave lip service to orthodoxy but were at heart free-thinkers. And that is not to mention the great orthodox mass of Jefferson's followers.")

The Federalists, on the other hand, claimed to seek a conservative polity by means of a strong central government coupled with a property-minded, activist judiciary. We are still living with that tragic error, having seen what happens when a strong central government, and its judicial branch in particular, falls into the hands of those who are not quite so conservative or property-minded. Both in his political thought and in his behavior while in office, Wilson argues, Jefferson distin-

guished himself as far more of a conservative than arch-Federalist Alexander Hamilton—who, according to Russell Kirk, did not qualify as a conservative.

Especially relevant today is Jefferson's understanding, shared by most everyone at the time, that the First Amendment was a *restriction* on the power of the federal government, not a grant of power. It prevented the federal government from establishing a national religion, but it did not grant power to

that government to interfere in the church-state relations decided upon by the states. That was a matter for the states themselves to decide. "Certainly no power over religious discipline has been delegated to the general government," Jefferson once wrote. "It must thus rest with the states as far as it can be in any human authority." Jefferson the civil libertarian had no appetite for federal intervention into the life of the states in order to protect individual rights. He wrote in an 1804 letter to Abigail Adams, "While we deny that Congress has a right to control the freedom of the press, we have ever asserted the right of the States, and their exclusive right to do so."

Even with the added complication of the Fourteenth Amendment, the Jeffersonian edifice still stood, if in somewhat attenuated form. In the early 20th century, issues of church-state relations arose in the Supreme Courts of Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, and Texas, and in each case, when the court mentioned the federal Constitution at all it was to deny its relevance to a state concern.

With federal courts striking down state referenda, state constitutional amendments, and state laws—all of them conservative, perfectly constitutional, and, according to the view of the Constitution held by all of the framers of that document, absolutely none of the federal government's business—Jefferson

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son's vindication should be more apparent than ever. Yet the Jeffersonian principle of local self-government is effectively excluded from the spectrum of permissible debate in America.

Wilson's analysis of neoconservatism, much of it composed during the 1980s, reads as if it had been written only days ago. He makes quick work of neoconservative slogans: "Global democracy," in specific historical terms, goes back to the 1930s, when it was created as a mélange of Wilsonism and Soviet popular front propaganda. Given the propensity of American governments for dropping high explosives on the 'enemies of democracy,' such propaganda can do nothing in the 1980s but make every intelligent foreigner feel uneasy and render prudent discussion of the national interest nearly impossible."

The issue of immigration serves to separate the genuine conservative from the impostor, as it reveals whether he believes that human societies can flourish on the basis of Enlightenment platitudes alone, or whether he recognizes that all the general principles and philosophical ideas in the world cannot substitute for the shared history, cultural similarity, and unstated assumptions that alone render a social order tolerable and workable. As a real conservative, Wilson denies "that all human societies are abstractions in which people are infinitely interchangeable. Human cultures are in some ways quite sensitive organisms, subject to disruption and debilitation in a variety of ways, many of them not well understood. Considering the changes that we face, would it not be simple prudence to pause and take thought of the morrow?"

To this eminently conservative reaction to unchecked immigration the neoconservative establishment can reply only with sloganeering. Any thought of the social and cultural consequences of this forced meeting of cultures (which is what "free immigration" amounts to, according to libertarian scholar Hans-Hermann Hoppe), when considered at all, is dismissed as mere racism, from which neoconservatives—who would

never set foot in a neighborhood of Hispanic immigrants or send their children to a Hispanic-majority school—are of course happily exempt.

One of the most destructive of the many myths that Wilson identifies as having taken widespread root in America is that of the Sixties' generation as "the most idealistic and love-filled of all generations." "In fact," writes Wilson, "that generation was the most spoiled, selfish, and vicious generation ever produced by America." Some have found it peculiar that members of that generation should in the 1990s have been such eager partisans of bombing and war. Wilson perceives no contradiction:

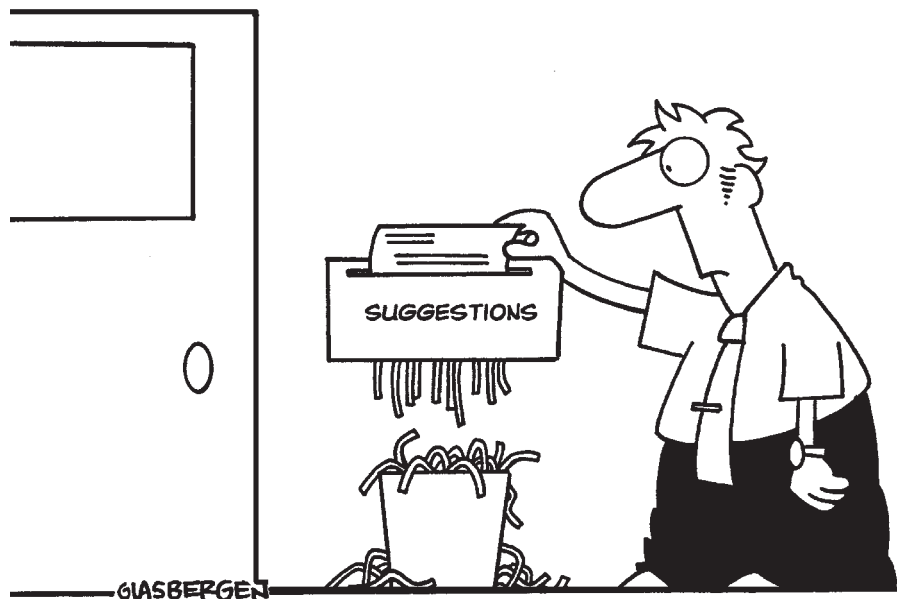
The late undeclared war in the Balkans (like urban crime and the drug culture) is merely the natural outcome of the 60s. The Flower Child generation happily sends cluster bombs to destroy innocent people who have caused them frustration. It is not a reversal of character for them, but a natural expression of their customary self-righteousness, irresponsibility, and viciousness.

The range of topics that Wilson covers here is impressive, and he invariably has something interesting to say. *From Union to Empire* features essays on

AIDS, abortion, the drug war, foreign policy, immigration, and a great many other subjects, as well as biographical sketches of 19th-century Jeffersonians (such as John Taylor of Caroline, George Mason, and St. George Tucker). Wilson also profiles important modern-day conservatives, from Russell Kirk, Richard Weaver, and James Burnham to Sam Francis, Murray Rothbard, and Pat Buchanan.

This volume of essays, all of which deserved a longer shelf life than periodicals typically allow, is something to celebrate; its only drawback is the lack of an index. Wilson's brand of Southern conservatism, so sensible and persuasive, has been effectively absent from American political debate for far too long. But as the seat of empire in Washington, D.C., grows more and more degenerate, it must become increasingly obvious, even to conservatives who until now have refused Jefferson his due, that his commitment to decentralization is the only way forward if civilized life is to be restored. ■

Thomas E. Woods Jr., a founding member of the League of the South, is associate editor of the Latin Mass magazine and author of Ever Ancient, Ever New: Catholic Intellectuals and the Progressive Era.



[*Diversity: The Invention of a Concept*, Peter Wood, Encounter Books, 360 pages]

Multiculturalism Writ Large

By Elizabeth Wright

IN HIS BOOK *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept*, Peter Wood describes his pleasure as a child in Pittsburgh when visiting the city's aviary, where birds from disparate regions of the world were all intermingled—"species whose ancestors last met when Tyrannosaurus Rex still was king." Several years later, however, a renovation of the aviary resulted in individual exhibits, separating the birds in order to simulate natural habitat. Now one can stand in front of a window, writes Wood, "and watch 14 cockatoos sit on an authentic dead Australian tree."

This "self-consciously educational" exercise in artificial diversity has, on a grander scale, seeped into society, where it has given birth to a movement so powerful that it has transformed American culture. No institution has escaped the influence of "diversity," an ideology that has taken the form of a social ideal. The entire education system, the church, the arts, and business—all have come under the spell of the diversity advocates (or "diversiphiles," as Wood calls them) and have capitulated to their imperatives.

Real cultural diversity, the result of individuals demonstrating their differences through their opinions, experiences, talents, and tastes, has given way to an imposter diversity that insists on the pre-eminence of racial and gender identification. According to diversiphiles, group identity is a more substantial factor than individuality.

In this worldview, certain groups are singled out for special treatment and their members accorded privileges in proportion to the supposed suffering of their ancestors. Since damages done in

the past, so the story goes, continue to impact the lives of the living, members of these groups deserve a share of society's bounty that they may not merit through their own efforts.

Diversity is affirmative action and multiculturalism writ large. Where affirmative action sought to bend the rules in school and business, diversity's more grandiose goal is, as Wood puts it, "gigantic in its ambition." Diversiphiles demand more than just equality in the eyes of the law. It is social equality that must be guaranteed through a process that intrudes racial consciousness into society's every crevice.

In the skewed world of diversity, nothing less than full acceptance of ethnic customs is acceptable. From a culture that burdens its members with odious practices like female genital mutilation to one that produced men who made tangible the liberating concept of individual rights—all are the same and must be accorded equal deference. (Well, maybe those dead white men aren't due quite as much deference as others.)

Before the 1978 *Bakke* Supreme Court decision and Justice Powell's meandering reasoning, the idea that diversity was educationally worthwhile was unknown. In fact, from a comprehensive examination of earlier references, Wood found that, up to the 1970s, when "diversity" was cited as a feature in academia, it referred to the country's variety of colleges and their sundry curricula, as opposed to more academically rigid state-run institutions.

It's not that the notion of diversity, as we know it today, did not exist. It was there, as Wood puts it, "in leftist American intellectual culture" for at least a decade before *Bakke*. But it took the *Bakke* decision, and the legal credibility that Powell appeared to give to diversity as a value in itself, to open the floodgates. And what a flood it has been.

Fanning out from the academia that gave it birth, diversity was soon embraced by the business community. I was made aware of this in the early 1990s, when a couple of black acquaintances

sent me their résumés, in the scant chance that I might pass them on. I noticed that in each case, the person had added, under the skills category, "Diversity Consultant" or "Diversity Trainer." Since neither of these people worked in fields that might seem related to such expertise, I could not imagine what they might know about advising businesses on race management. I was puzzled, but not for long. An investigation led to the discovery of a newly developing sub-division of the already hustler-filled race industry. I learned about "experts" who conduct diversity-training sessions for organizations and businesses. I read about people who performed "culture audits" for employers and of the growing numbers of diversity coaches and co-ordinators (who cost anywhere from \$1,000 to \$10,000 an hour). There seemed to be new consulting firms forming by the minute, with some of them specializing in "conflict resolution." (Could it be that the conflict that needed resolving was the anger of employees who were forced to endure multicultural indoctrination in demeaning "sensitivity" workshops?)

Business had clearly become a partner in expanding and nurturing the new ideal of diversity. With these two powerful institutions in its corner, I wondered about the prospects of it burrowing even deeper into American life. Now, years later, my apprehensions are confirmed. For even if some day the Supreme Court rules against racial preferences, its legacies may be insuperable.

It has cursed us with race leaders who have addicted their constituencies to competition in a racial spoils system. Although it was not the initiator of mass immigration run amok, it has provided justifications for harboring millions of illegal aliens, negatively impacting labor patterns and the overall welfare of native-born citizens.

Diversity is also responsible for despicable "hate crime" laws that ratchet up punishments primarily against those charged with petty crimes for the supposed thoughts in their heads instead of for the actual crimes committed.

And by rendering the Church a hollow, nonjudgmental instrument (that Wood rightly describes as “neo-pagan”), diversity has robbed us of a moral voice with which to fight its destructive incursions.

Is it possible that diversity’s entrenched principles, fortified by legal statutes, can ever be waved away with the stroke of a Supreme Court decision? Will it be pos-

sible to eradicate the suspicions, fears, and demoralization that have played an important part in diversity’s control over the ordinary, well-meaning American?

little girl responded, “No, she had better lipstick.” Now Corcoran felt compelled to find out if the child was “gravitating to the familiar,” towards “her own kind.” No, that wasn’t it, protested the child, since she did not “look like a white Barbie.”

From this evidence, Corcoran finally told her daughter that, no, she was not prejudiced for choosing a doll based on

countless government regulations.

Even if the most recent Supreme Court decision had come down against racial preferences, there is no reason to believe that diversity would die of its own accord. Its most vigorous supporters are too buoyed by the enormous grants delivered over by major foundations. Wood cites the Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund that, in the late 1990s, gave \$25 million to find ways to make arts audiences “more diverse.”

And, let’s face it, diversiphiles thrive on euphemisms. When, in the past, various court decisions sought to limit the scope of affirmative action, like outlawing “race norming,” advocates of diversity just called their pet projects by other names. Such was the lesson learned in California by a majority who thought they had done away with affirmative action through their vote for Proposition 209. Voters in Washington State, thinking their will counted for something, did the same in 1998. In each case, where the educational system had been affected, diversity’s acolytes simply set out to achieve affirmative action by other means.

As unwelcome a speculation as it may be, the Founders’ nation may never be rescued from the clutches of the multiculturalists, if for no other fact than the onrushing populations arriving from abroad, who are displacing those Americans who still retain a memory of the Constitution’s “guarantees.” In just a few years, when expounding on the finer points of *habeas corpus* or enumerated powers, who will even know what you’re talking about? ■

Elizabeth Wright is the editor of Issues & Views.

MOTHER THEN DECIDED THAT SHE WOULD BUY MORE **BARBIE DOLLS** THAT “AT LEAST WOULD BE DIVERSE.”

lipstick. Mother then decided that she would buy more Barbie dolls that “at least would be diverse.” From this point on, Corcoran was ever alert to signals emanating from her daughter. One day, when the child referred to Asia as having “countries with the funny writing,” Corcoran was pleased that the girl quickly “corrected” herself. Could there be a better illustration of the success of the diversiphiles than this anxious little girl’s fears that are reinforced by those of her mother?

Other than its antecedents in ’60s radicalism, is it possible to finger specific culprits for diversity’s transcendence? Wood finds no plot, no band of conspirators responsible for its conquest. There is no Machiavelli, claims Wood, no Darwin, and no Friedan. Diversity “arrived unparented, as a kind of collective emanation of ponderous academic silliness.”

On the prospects for its ultimate demise, Wood is ambivalent. In one place he suggests that members of diversity’s preferred groups might themselves oppose its condescending implications. (Any takers on that possibility?) In his only bewildering passage, he writes that diversity is “both disappearing and indelible.” Finally, he concedes, “Diversity may not pass away at all.”

This is a pragmatic conclusion when you consider that diversity is now an indispensable tool in party politics, rooted in the marketing practices of business—as companies seek to create, exaggerate, and exploit multicultural niches—and thoroughly written into

She quotes from the scriptures of various diversity ideologues, who lectured on pride and heritage. One claimed that children should not be allowed to come to their own conclusions. After all, “You don’t know where children are getting their information from.” Don’t we? If this seven-year-old was a pupil of the school system, she already had been subjected to full doses of multicultural preachments.

Returning to her daughter, Corcoran asked the child if she had chosen the doll because she thought it was prettier. The

countless government regulations.

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Foul Words, Shameful Acts

This issue marks the first anniversary of *The American Conservative*, a magazine Pat Buchanan, Scott McConnell, and I established in order to save the right wing

from itself. Until now *The American Conservative* has mostly dealt with the issues at hand: the war in Iraq, the accelerating rates of immigration, the neo-conservative desire to attack anyone who may one day pose a threat to Israel, and the neocon notion that waging wars in culturally alien lands to establish democracy will one day make life in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles as exciting and colorful as it is in Tel Aviv. One subject we have not dealt with is the visual junk diet of soaps, smut, and vulgar language: the verbal corruption that has infected our nation's bloodstream and turned courtesy into a dirty word among the young.

Two weeks ago while in London, I read about Paul McCartney, now alas Sir Paul, visiting Tower Bridge in order to view illusionist David Blaine starving himself inside a glass box suspended 40 feet up in the air. The British press has been covering the freak show as if it were the Second Coming, with serious broadsheets dispatching their best and brightest to see if Blaine is cheating or not. This in itself is pretty horrible. It trivializes everything that matters, starting with the fact the British government lied about weapons of mass destruction—"If we don't act right now we can all be dead within 45 minutes" (Tony Blair during question time in parliament).

Worse has been the reaction of the masses since the publicity-mad Blaine began his fast in a perspex box above the Thames. People have tried to float pieces of salami past his cage, have

tossed eggs at the box, and have showered abuse worthy of the Iranian mob during the takeover of the American embassy in 1979. One man shot non-stop golf balls but obviously was not very good, as he missed with all of them.

"Why hasn't Blaine got any thinner?" screamed the *Sun* newspaper, a Murdoch-owned rag that makes those scandal sheets sold in American supermarkets seem to possess plenipotential dignity by comparison. (Ironically, Blaine does not seem to have lost his love handles nor his flabby chest.) But back to Paul the Beatle.

When asked by a reporter why he was there, he answered, "I came to this f--- place to see this f----- c---." When a man asked if he could shake his hand, Sir Paul was as articulate as ever. "F--- off, you c---." It almost makes one want to hear some rap music just to get away from this F-word, which brings me to the root of the lack of courtesy nowadays: Hollywood, pop music, and rap.

THE LOWERING OF STANDARDS HAS TURNED US INTO A NATION OF FOULMOUTHED, TONGUE-TIED MORONS.

The F-word is not only ubiquitous in films, its use is seen to be as cool as it gets. Lewd language is used gratuitously in movies, hard-core pop music, and best-selling novels. No wonder crude and ugly words are now heard every minute of every day and night on our streets, in shops, and, most alarmingly, in schools.

Take a walk in any park and watch youngsters playing touch football, softball, or even tennis. Casual swearing is the norm, a way of expressing pleasure, surprise, and certainly anger.

Two summers ago I was on a French island off St. Tropez and went for a run. I passed a camp for young men where a spirited game of soccer was taking place. I stopped to watch for about 15 minutes and did not hear a single swear word.

Now you might think I'm exaggerating in order to make a point. I am not. French schoolchildren are not allowed to swear, and if they do, they're punished accordingly. The same goes for Greece, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries. In Poland and Egypt particularly, swearing adults are subject to arrest, and indeed people communicate with each other without resulting to vulgarity.

The corruption of language in our culture is just one aspect of the general coarsening of our life. I once asked Martin Scorsese why he included so much swearing in his otherwise wonderful films. *Cinema vérité* was the answer. In

other words, that's how real people talk. But Scorsese makes movies about gangsters and lowlifes, who do speak as if the F-word were going out of style. Yet in the movie *Goodfellas*, the F-word was used 212 times, whereas in the 1971 film *Dirty Harry*, despite the violence in it, it was only used once.



Boys, especially those in ghettos, grow up with this image of what manliness is: angry, dissatisfied, foulmouthed. When they hear millionaire rappers use lewd language, they try to outdo their heroes. The absence of a father does not help. How many times have you heard a black mother asking her son not to swear? Plenty, I'd say, but it takes a father to put the kid straight.

Let's face it. Moviemakers are out to make money, and their chief audiences are the young. Music-makers ditto. They use freedom of expression as an excuse to push the envelope as far as it will go and scream censorship when their right to do so is questioned.

Just imagine Gary Cooper or Cary Grant swearing like some of the present-day slobs that pass for movie stars. Or the divine Vivien Leigh or Ava Gardner, whose salty language was legendary—in private, of course.

The studios would not have put up with it. Neither would audiences. The result was that when I was growing up I never heard foul language outside the butt room in school (and then extremely limited) or perhaps an after-hours strip joint. One simply did not swear, and it was considered very uncool to do so.

Gentlemanly behavior was looked up to. No longer. I suppose the Sixties and the hippy culture did away with all that. Bleeding hearts eager to accommodate angry blacks salivated at ghetto language. Movies, books, and music follow the trend; they do not set it. So what we got was the lowering of standards, with the general population given a visual diet of smut and soft porn, the effects of which has turned us into a nation of foulmouthed, tongue-tied morons.

Aristotle knew a thing or two about such matters. He said that lawmakers should be extremely vigilant about foul language "for the light utterance of shameful words leads soon to shameful actions." Hear, hear!

In ancient Greece, the young showed deference to the old in matters of physical convenience. In my time, I was taught to give my seat to anyone older. Just take a look today in any subway. If a youngster offered his seat to an older person or a woman, he would probably be dissed by his peers and excommunicated from the gang.

Some of the most ill-mannered people I have come across are those so-called celebrities who arrive in public places wearing track suits, surrounded by beefy minders and swearing. Their message to the rest of us is that a perk of success is the freedom to look and behave like a lout.

So what happens? Young people don't bother to wait for the success; they just—as the grotesque shoe ad tells us—do it. Deference is now a dirty word. Yet if the concept of deference were completely abandoned in favor of self-assertion, the world would become even more intolerable than it already is.

So what I propose is applying the broken-window theory—zero tolerance for even minor infractions. The next time you hear someone needlessly swearing, do not put up with it. The next movie you hear of that is full of swear words, do not go to see it. Most important, the next time your child sounds like a Martin Scorsese hero, make sure he regrets it. It took a long time to build Rome, and this will take longer, but we've got to start somewhere. Otherwise we're all going to end up like Harvey Weinstein. ■